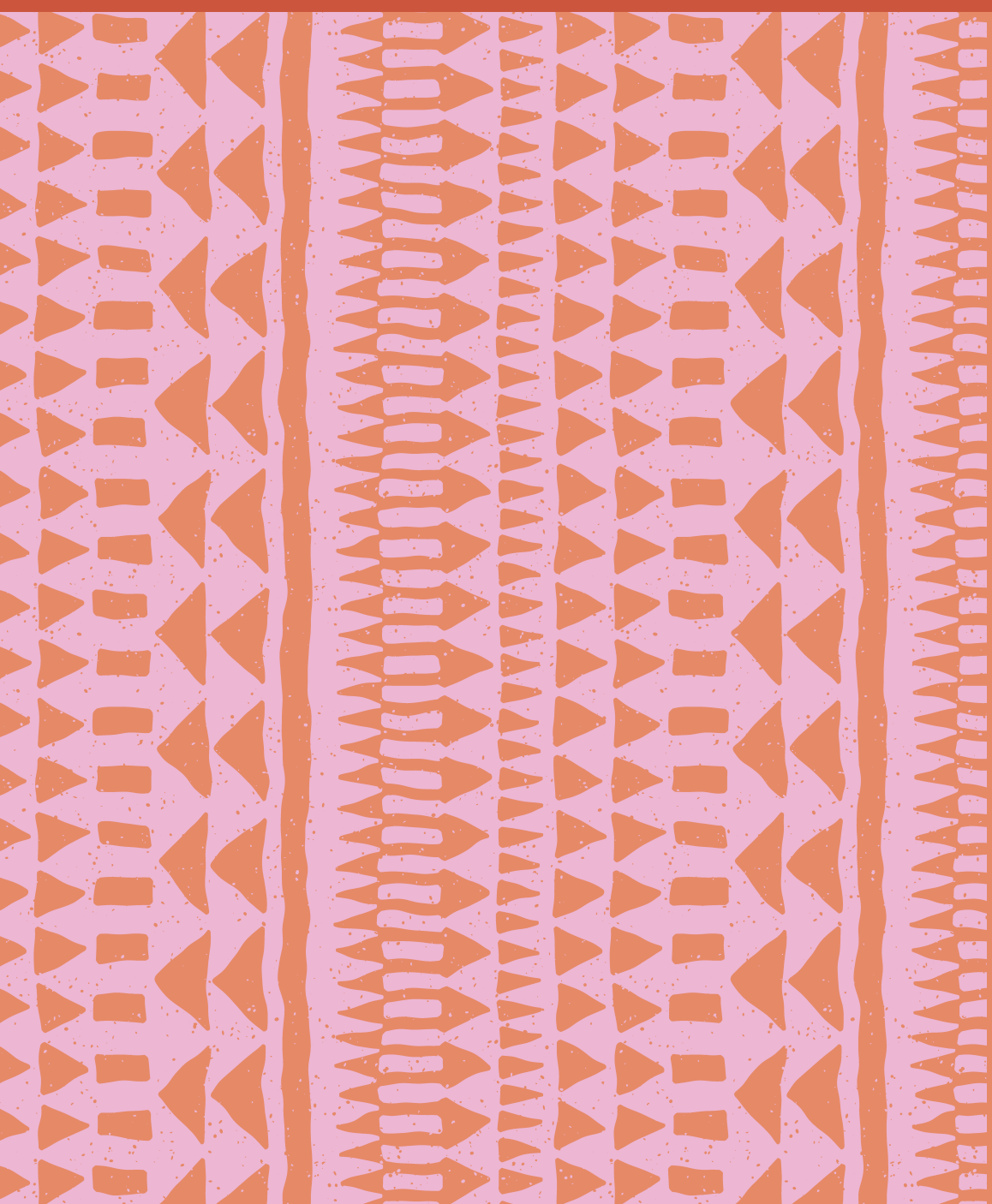
The Frieze of the Palace of the Stuccoes, Acanceh, Yucatan, Mexico

Virginia Elizabeth Miller



DUMBARTON OAKS STUDIES IN PRE-COLUMBIAN ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY | 31

STUDIES IN PRE-COLUMBIAN ART & ARCHAEOLOGY NUMBER THIRTY-ONE

THE FRIEZE OF THE PALACE OF THE STUCCOES, ACANCEH, YUCATAN, MEXICO

VIRGINIA E. MILLER

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection Washington, D.C. 1991

To my parents

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In 1982 and 1986 I visited the City of Bristol Museum in Bristol, England, to examine and photograph Adela Breton's watercolors of the stucco frieze, which, with the museum's permission, are published here for the first time. The support of the museum staff—David Dawson and Jennifer Stewart, Curators in Archaeology and History in 1982 and 1986 respectively, and Museum Assistants Mrs. Mary Campbell and Miss Susan Giles (now Assistant Curator)—was greatly appreciated. On both occasions the museum photographers also made my task considerably easier, and I am particularly grateful to Mr. Andy Cotton for developing my black and white photographs in the museum lab on the spot. The second trip to Bristol was sponsored by the English-Speaking Union of Chicago, whose assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

The support of the Campus Research Board of the University of Illinois-Chicago in funding the publication of the complete set of extant Adela Breton watercolors of the Acanceh frieze for the first time in color is greatly appreciated.

Early photographs at Acanceh are published here with the permission of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Daniel W. Jones, Jr., the museum's Photographic Archivist, was responsible for assisting me in locating the negatives and providing the prints.

In 1984 a National Endowment for the Humanities Travel to Collections Grant allowed me to study William Gates' unpublished manuscript on Acanceh as well as his notes, photographs, and drawings of the Palace of the Stuccoes, which are housed in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I thank Dennis Rowley, the Curator of Archives and Manuscripts, and Miss Billie Plunkett, Curator of Photographs, for taking the time to locate the material. Martin Raish of the Art Department kindly arranged for the illustrations to be photographed and sent to me.

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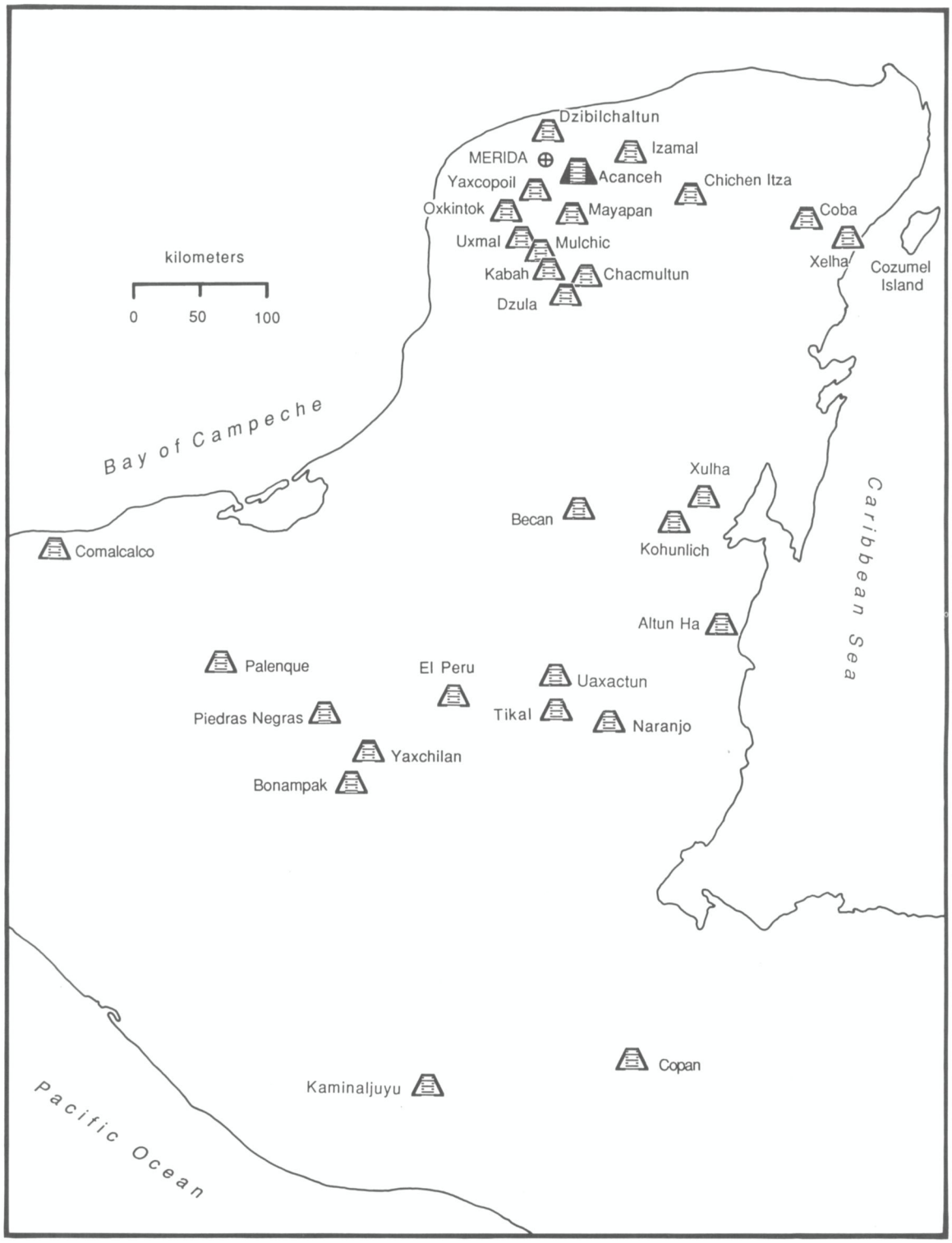


Fig. 1 Map of the Maya area showing sites mentioned in the text. Drawn by Patricia K. Anderson.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Discovery of the Palace of the Stuccoes and Previous Research on the Frieze

In 1906 residents of Acanceh, Yucatan, a town 25 km southeast of Merida (Fig. 1), were dismantling an ancient structure for building material when they uncovered a 2 m high wall decorated with brightly painted stucco reliefs (Fig. 2). The 13 m long surface, protected by a coat of whitewash and the rubble of later buildings, displayed two rows of animal, bird, and human figures modeled in relief and contained within twenty-one overlapping cartouches (Fig. 3). The scene was framed at either end by large stucco birds and above and below by decorative moldings. While the context of the wall was not understood at the time, later excavations showed it to be the upper facade of a small Maya structure now known as the Palace of the Stuccoes.

The find, first reported in 1908 in a brief article by Adela Breton, was remarkable in several ways. In the first place, the excellent state of preservation of the facade at the time of its discovery made it a rarity in the northern Maya lowlands where little architectural decoration in stucco has survived. Second, the motifs represented and the composition of the frieze are unique in Maya monumental art. Finally, in both style and iconography the frieze displays an intriguing mixture of Maya and non-Maya features that has puzzled iconographers since its discovery.

Given the advances that have been made in recent decades in Maya studies in general and in northern lowlands archaeology in particular, Acanceh's Palace of the Stuccoes deserves to be reexamined. At one time the best preserved of the handful of stucco-ornamented structures extant in the northern lowlands, it occupies an important place in the rather sketchy history of the region prior to the rise of cities like Uxmal and Chichen Itza. Furthermore, it will be shown here that the eclectic style and iconography of the facade serve not to isolate it but rather to place it within the broader, cosmopolitan tradition of contemporaneous highland sites like Xochicalco and Cacaxtla.

Breakthroughs in Maya epigraphy, linguistics, and iconography have also made possible a deeper understanding of the frieze's unique subject matter. The revelation that bloodletting permeated Maya ritual life to a greater extent than previously realized, for example, is reflected not only in the presence of blood and sacrificial themes here but also in the Teotihuacan-derived motifs, now associated in Maya iconography with warfare and sacrifice. Cave and water imagery, as well as the particular birds and animals represented, can be seen as references to the Maya underworld, a theme now well-documented in painted funerary ceramics but relatively rare in monumental, public art.

Following its discovery, pioneers in Maya archaeology such as Teobert Maler and Sylvanus G. Morley came to view the facade, and in 1911 Eduard Seler published the only detailed analysis and drawing (by W. von den Steinen) of the relief (Fig. 3). William Gates was to have published a colored drawing of the frieze shortly before his

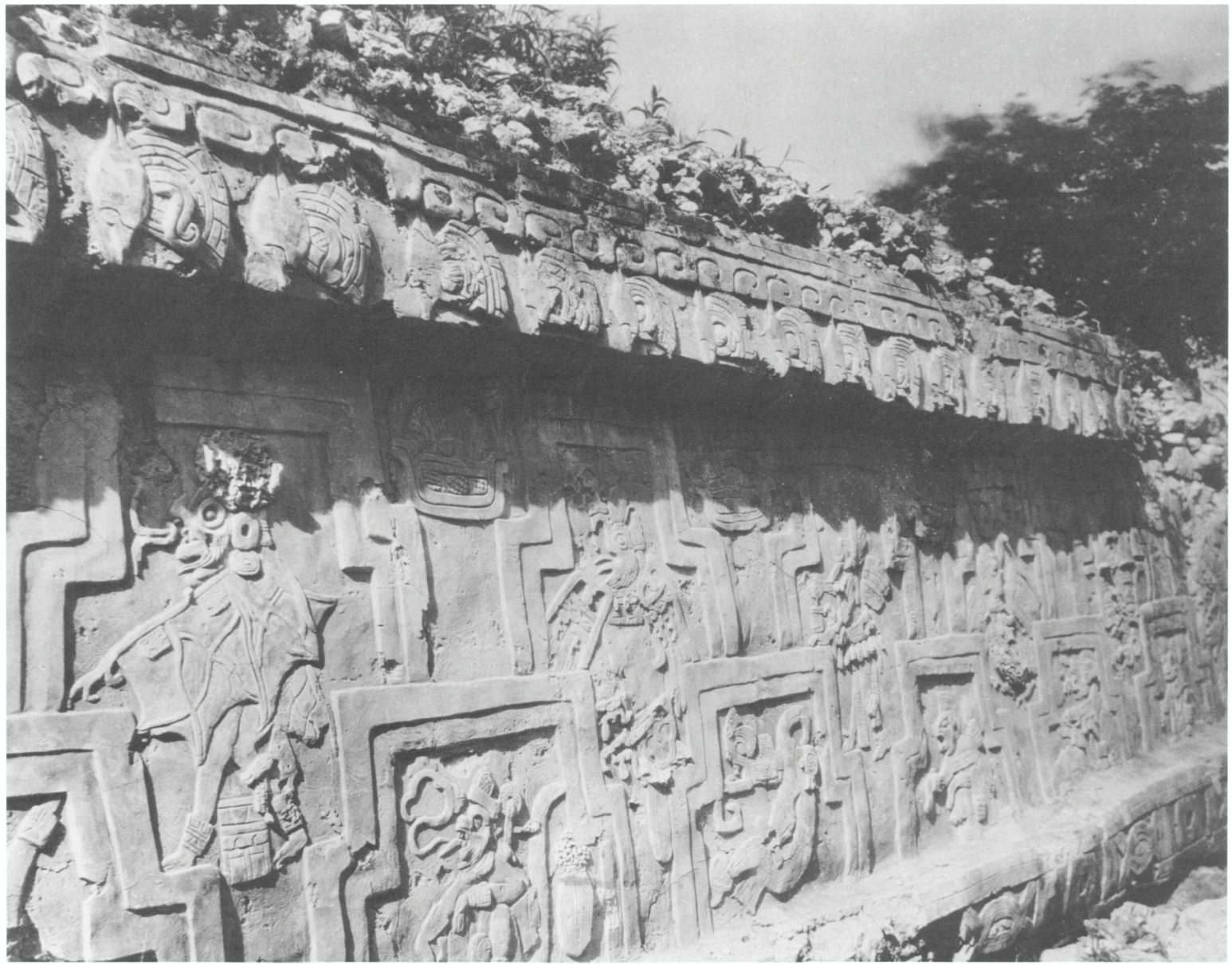


Fig. 2 Str. 1, north facade, characters 8–17. Photograph by Teobert Maler, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

death in 1940. His accompanying text, however, represents an attempt to attribute the architectural style of the northern lowlands to the Xius, with the site of Acanceh mentioned only incidentally.

Although no description of the earliest excavations exists, both Breton and Seler saw painted walls in either the Palace or the building immediately opposite. Seler reproduced some of the painted hieroglyphs in a later version of his paper on the site (1902–23), while Breton's copies of the fragmentary figures, published here for the first time, were left to the Bristol Museum, unmentioned in any of her publications or papers (see Appendix) (Figs. 44–46; Pls. 7–9). The limited archaeological explorations undertaken at Acanceh in the 1930s and 1940s were directed primarily toward the consolidation of the facade (Fernández 1939) and to establishing a relative chronology for the site based on ceramic and architectural analysis (Andrews IV 1942, 1965; Brainerd 1942, 1958). The brief reports issued as a result of these archaeological excavations did not address the meaning or significance of the stucco reliefs.

The Palace has been mentioned frequently in Mesoamerican literature because of the exotic character of its facade (e.g., M. Coe 1987: 84). Until recently, however, little had been added to Seler's discussion of the facade's iconography. The rediscovery of the Breton watercolors at Bristol in the early 1970s, coupled with increasing scholarly interest in cross-cultural relationships in Mesoamerica, has revived interest in Acanceh.

In 1985, for example, Hasso von Winning published a brief study of the facade based on Breton's work and the photographs taken around 1928 by American businessman, inventor, and Maya enthusiast T. A. Willard. Von Winning (1985: 40, fig. 41) interprets the frieze conventionally as a two-dimensional, vertical view of the Maya universe expressing the necessity of propitiating rain deities with blood and incense offerings to insure agricultural fertility. He also sees the influence not only of Teotihuacan, but also of Oaxaca, Tlaxcala-Puebla, and the Gulf Coast, but does not indicate the mode of transmission or a motive for adopting foreign features.

A recent dissertation (Freer n.d.) on the relationship of the Puuc area to other regions of Mesoamerica includes a discussion of the frieze and its Teotihuacan connections. Freer, unfortunately unaware of the redating of the Palace of the Stuccoes (see below), places it too early. Although he appears to postulate direct Teotihuacan contact with Yucatan, including occupation, neither the archaeological evidence at the site nor the architecture and decoration of the Palace of the Stuccoes supports his hypothesis.

Finally, the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol, England, recently presented an exhibition of Breton's work in Mexico, the first dedicated solely to her paintings since 1946 (Giles 1989: 60). The accompanying catalogue (Giles and Stewart 1989) includes several essays that refer to Breton's presence at Acanceh, as well as two color reproductions of details of the frieze (von Winning 1989; V. Miller 1989; M. McVicker 1989).

The publication of Breton's better-known paintings of murals and artifacts from Chichen Itza (A. Miller 1977; Coggins and Shane 1984) has been a catalyst for searching out her work at other Mexican sites. The urgent need to record rapidly disappearing polychrome painting and sculpture throughout Mesoamerica has also brought attention to Breton's pioneering efforts (Kinoshita 1990). While the existence of a few watercolors cannot compensate for the destruction of major monuments, it does at least provide another chance for discovering just what the ancient Mesoamericans considered worth recording on the interior and exterior walls of their buildings.

Illustrations of the Frieze

If one were to rely on the stucco reliefs in their present condition, the task of analyzing the frieze would be hopeless: vandalism and the elements have almost completely erased the painted stucco figures from the facade. As of 1981, only characters 14, 15, 17, and 19 were relatively intact, while portions of characters 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, and 18 remained (Fig. 4).[1] It was not, in fact, until

[1] The characters are numbered from left to right, after the drawing published by Seler in 1911.

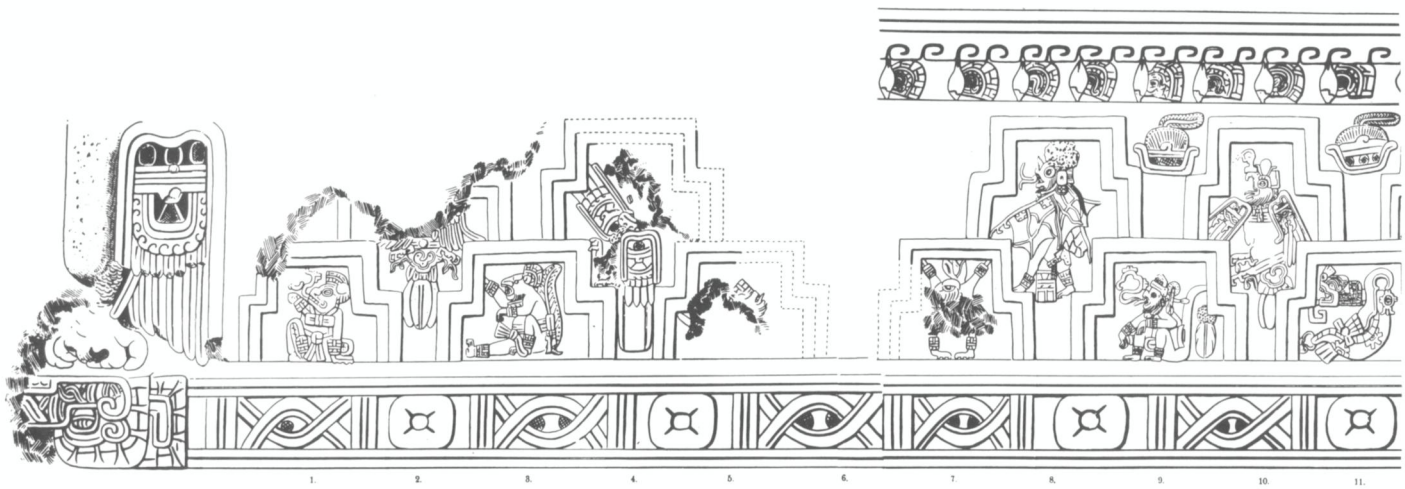


Fig. 3 Str. 1, north facade. After Seler, 1902–23: pl. 11.

1940 that a protective roof was placed over the exposed wall. Fortunately, excellent photographs by early visitors to the site exist, some published by Seler and others, and some housed in the photographic archives of institutions like the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and the library of Brigham Young University. While individual photographs cannot always be attributed to specific photographers, it is known that Seler, his wife, Caecilie Seler-Sachs, Teobert Maler, Breton, and Mr. and Mrs. W. M. James of Merida all photographed the frieze soon after it had been uncovered. With Seler's drawing of the frieze, these images provide an invaluable record of the frieze as it looked at the time of its discovery.

More important, the indefatigable Adela Breton, well known for her copies of the Chichen Itza murals, spent five weeks at Acanceh in 1907 making a watercolor rendition of the relief (Carmichael 1973: 30–32). It is published here in totality for the first time (Figs. 20, 25, 28, 32, 42; Pls. 1–4, 6). The watercolor, now in the City of Bristol Museum, is drawn to scale and divided into several sections. Unfortunately, the section from character 12 to character 17 is missing, although Breton's black and white drawings of characters 1–4 and 8–17 are also in Bristol.[2] A detail from a hand-colored photograph of the entire frieze, now in the Peabody Museum, has been substituted for the missing section (Fig. 40; Pl. 5).[3] Traces of paint still visible on the facade indicate that the colors of both the photograph and Breton's watercolor are generally correct.[4]

[2] A black and white photograph of the missing part of Breton's watercolor is at the Bristol Museum, as is a partly colored sketch of characters 12–15. Another black and white photograph of this watercolor, showing parts of characters 11 and 15 and characters 12–14, is in the Gates collection at Brigham Young University. Gates does not indicate when or where he obtained the photograph, although a second photograph in the collection is of part of the painting still in the Bristol Museum.

[3] Neither the photographer nor the colorist of the photograph is known, although this and a number of black and white photographs were a gift of Mrs. W. M. James to the Peabody Museum in 1910. Mr. and Mrs. James were residents of Merida and aficionados of Maya archaeology, and Mrs. James must have been one of the first to photograph the frieze (Breton 1908: fig. 2). According to Ian Graham (personal communication, 1982), the photographs in the Peabody Museum that cannot be attributed to Maler were taken by Mr. James. In an early version of his Acanceh manuscript, William Gates indicates that the colors on his set of colored photographs were provided by Mr. James as well.

Gates obtained a series of photographs of the frieze, at least some of which are by Maler, from a private Mexican collector in about 1915. These hand-colored photographs were being used by Gates to determine the colors for his drawing of the frieze, a partially colored version of which is also at Brigham Young University. The photographs in the Gates collection may very well be the same as those donated by Mrs. James to the Peabody Museum.

[4] There is, however, a discrepancy in the colors of the frames surrounding characters 12–15 between the photograph and the partially colored drawing. Both the outer and inner frames of character 15, for example, are shown as yellow in the former (Fig. 40), while in the latter the outer is red and the inner is blue. The few other details in color in the Breton drawing correspond to the photograph.

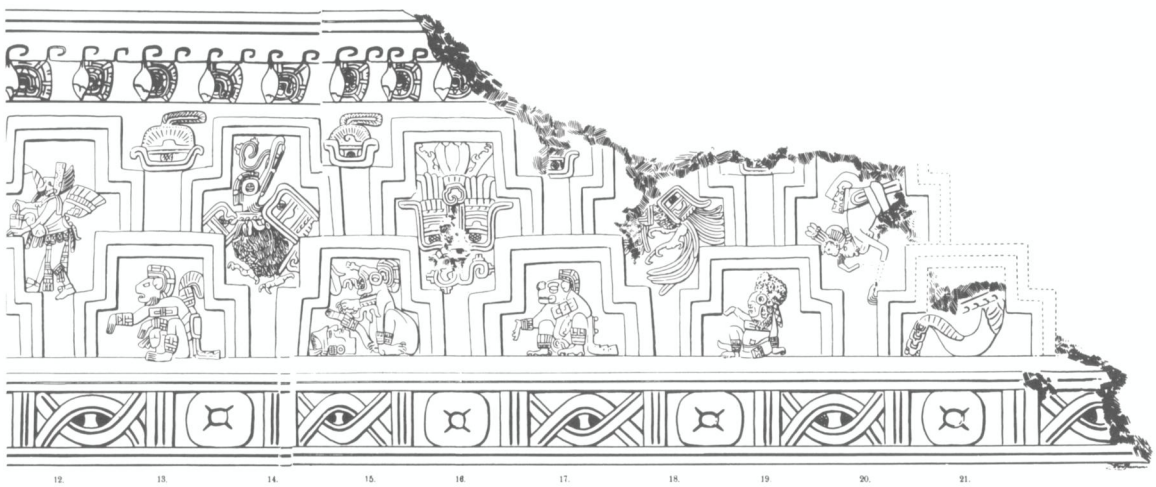


Fig. 4 Str. 1, characters 14–17. Photograph by Sheba Haner, 1981.

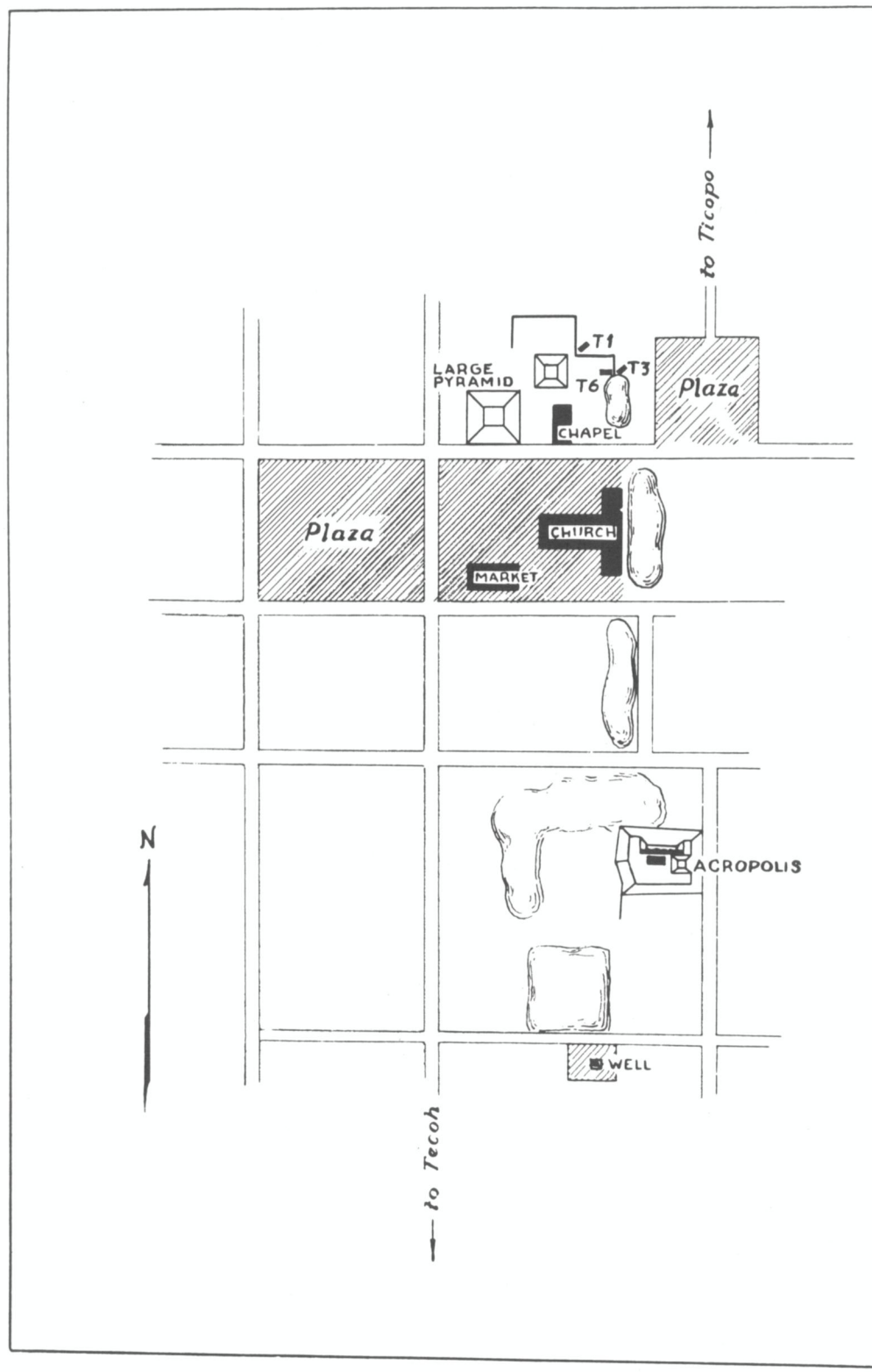


Fig. 5 Plan of Acanceh: Pyramids, Acropolis, and looted ruins. After Brainerd 1958: map 8b.

Breton's work is not only the single extant reproduction of the frieze in color, it is also the most accurate. The drawing published by Seler (Fig. 3), while good, contains small errors, while the unpublished version by Gates is the least exact. All other drawings of the frieze appear to be based at least in part on Seler's (cf. Figs. 12, 13).

Archaeological Investigations at Acanceh

The Site

The modern town of Acanceh overlies an extensive Pre-Hispanic settlement which is mentioned in several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, including the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys 1933: 73; Edmonson 1986: 91), the Land Treaty of Mani of 1557 (Roys 1943: 185), the *Relaciones de Yucatán* (1898, 11: chap. 3), *Documentos para la Historia de Yucatán* (Scholes et al. 1938, 2: 58), and Cogolludo (1957, 1: bk. 4, chap. 20) (Fig. 5). Little is recorded, however, of either the Pre-Conquest or Colonial history of Acanceh, although it is believed to have been within the borders of the Province of Chakan (Roys 1952: 174). Edmonson (1986: 269) identifies the town as number 162 of 171 places recorded in a ceremonial circuit of Yucatan commemorating *katun* 11 Ahau (1539).

The name Acanceh is usually translated from the Yucatec as "cry of the deer" (*acan,* "cry," *ceh,* "deer"). Other suggested etymologies include "pond (*acaan*) of the deer," "water muddied by deer" (Brito Sansores 1979: 365), "covered deer" (Edmonson 1986: 283), and even an unidentified medicinal plant (Roys 1957: 38).

The first modern report on the archaeological site is a brief reference by Désiré Charnay (1888: 287), who visited the town in 1881 (Davis 1981: 178). He refers to three pyramids on the plaza, one of which supplied the building material for the Acanceh train station. In this unidentified mound, Charnay found "fine sculptured blocks, like those employed at Uxmal" as well as "vases identical to those we unearthed at Teotihuacan." None of his finds, which also included "funeral objects," obsidian, and a "sceptre," are illustrated or described in more detail, unfortunately. But well before the discovery of the famous frieze, the explorer did mention the affinity between Yucatan and highland Mexico as demonstrated by the ceramics he found here.

The Pyramid

Before the discovery of the Palace of the Stuccoes, Acanceh was best known for the large, Late Pre-Classic pyramid on the main plaza of the town (Figs. 5–7) (cf. Seler 1911: pl. VI; Fernández 1939: fig. 15; Marquina 1951: pl. 202; Garza and Kurjack 1980: fig. 10). The pyramid was first uncovered and explored by Maler, who apparently left no published record of his efforts (Fernández 1939: 249). Subsequent limited excavations were undertaken by Mexican archaeologist Miguel Angel Fernández (n.d., 1939) and in 1941–42 by E. W. Andrews IV (1942, 1965) and George Brainerd (1958). The base measures 32 m, and the whole structure must have originally stood over 11 m in height. The stairs are 5 m wide (Marquina 1951: 800).

A radial structure with rounded inset corners, apron moldings, and recessed stairways, the Acanceh pyramid recalls other early pyramids like Uaxactun's E-VII-sub. Indeed, this complex of traits is thought to derive from the Peten. In the north, the entire set of features is rarely found in a single structure, although elements do occur separately, at Coba, Kohunlich, and Dzibilchaltun (Andrews and Andrews 1980: 126–127). A largely destroyed platform uncovered at a little-known ruin near Colonia, Yucatan has been compared to the Acanceh pyramid, although its apron moldings are not as broad, nor were any stairs uncovered (W. Coe 1952). The large (ca. 2.8 m square) stucco masks that once flanked the stairs on the upper terrace of the Acanceh structure have disappeared. Breton (1908: 37) first noted their resemblance to the large stucco masks at Izamal. The masks, as well as the steps, had once been painted red and had been hidden by a 6 m layer of rough stones which were removed by Maler, thus exposing them to the elements (Seler 1911: 1012–1013; Marquina 1951: 800).

A burial chamber on the summit of the pyramid is reported to have contained the remains of a

Fig. 6 Main plaza of Acanceh, looking north toward main pyramid. Photograph by Sheba Haner, 1981.

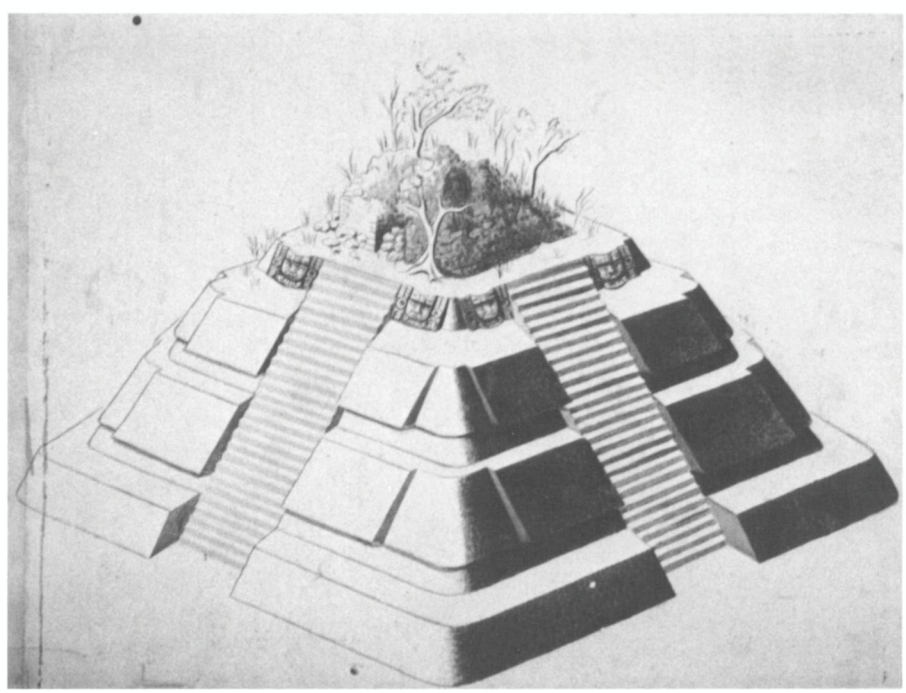


Fig. 7 Main pyramid, Acanceh, reconstruction drawing. Regional Museum of Anthropology, Yucatan; photograph by Sheba Haner, 1981.

man and a woman as well as ceramic vessels, both incised and painted (Breton 1908: 37; Seler 1911: 1012). Marquina (1951: 800) reports that Maler uncovered a small vaulted chamber, removing a gourd-shaped pot with an inscribed hieroglyphic inscription. But this vessel, now in the regional museum of anthropology in Merida, is also purported to be from the main pyramid at Mayapan (Brainerd 1958: fig. 90c).

The Acropolis and the Palace of the Stuccoes

Approximately 300 m southeast of the early pyramid is the Acropolis, a massive substructure about 8 m high and 50 m at the base (Figs. 5, 8, 9). It is surmounted by the remains of numerous buildings, including the Palace of the Stuccoes at its northern edge (Figs. 10, 11). When the Palace of the Stuccoes was first uncovered, the structure's facade was exposed only to the level of the medial moldings.[5] As a result, there was confusion regarding the nature of the building: Breton (1908), for example, interpreted the wall as the highest terrace of a pyramid containing burial chambers. Later excavations revealed that it was the upper facade of a building with interior chambers, and it became known as the Palace of the Stuccoes.

The term "palace" has been loosely applied to any relatively large, multichambered Maya structure located on a low platform as opposed to a pyramidal base (cf. G. Andrews 1975: 43).[6] Since the size of the Acanceh structure is fairly small and the height of its base unknown (although the Acropolis itself rose to at least 8 m), the building may just as well have been a temple. Andrews IV, in fact, preferred to call it the Stucco Temple (1942: 258). Because the name Palace of the Stuccoes has become established in the literature, that name will be retained here. The use of the term "palace," however, should not be construed as necessarily imparting a residential function to the building: it more likely served as an administrative or religious structure. Furthermore, factors such as its site, doors and windows, benches, alterations, length of occupation, and presence or absence of refuse, not just the structure's plan, must be taken into account in determining how a structure was used. The less loaded term "range-type structure" reflects the form of a building rather than its function but is cumbersome. Since the function of many better-excavated Maya structures is still the subject of scholarly argument, it is highly unlikely that we will ever know exactly what activities took place in the Palace of the Stuccoes.

Reconstructing the Palace of the Stuccoes

In 1933 Miguel Angel Fernández excavated the structure to floor level and consolidated what remained of the building and facade. Fernández' work indicated the approximate plan and dimensions of the Palace of the Stuccoes, as well as the existence of a three-chambered building to the north (Fernández n.d., 1939). The Palace, about 13 m long, consisted of four vaulted chambers, the two east-west rooms measuring approximately 2 m by 6 m, and the two north-south ones 2 m by 5 m (Marquina 1951: 802). Each of the rooms had at least one doorway to the exterior, although none of the four rooms apparently interconnected. The plan is comparable to other structures in the northern lowlands, particularly early ones such as Aka'na at Yaxcopoil (Andrews IV 1965: fig. 18) and some of the buildings at Dzibilchaltun, such as Str. 57 (Andrews and Andrews 1980: fig. 199).

In *Arquitectura prehispánica* (1951: 800–805), Marquina provided the first published drawings of the elevation, plan, and sections of the Palace of the Stuccoes (Fig. 12). Marquina's drawings differ slightly from those based on Andrews' investigations at the site in 1941–42 (Fig. 13). He places the door to the south vaulted chamber at the center of the room, for example, rather than slightly to the west as indicated by Andrews. Marquina also includes what appears to be a wall topped by a lintel, at the back of the north chamber, reaching only as high as the springing of the vault. The source for this projecting wall is not clear, as it is

[5] A recently published photo of the Palace of the Stuccoes by Teobert Maler shows clearly the rubble that still filled the space between it and the structure opposite at the time of its discovery (Graham 1990: 38–39).

[6] Good recent discussions of the "palace problem" in Maya architecture can be found in Kowalski (1987: chap. 6) and Harrison (1986).

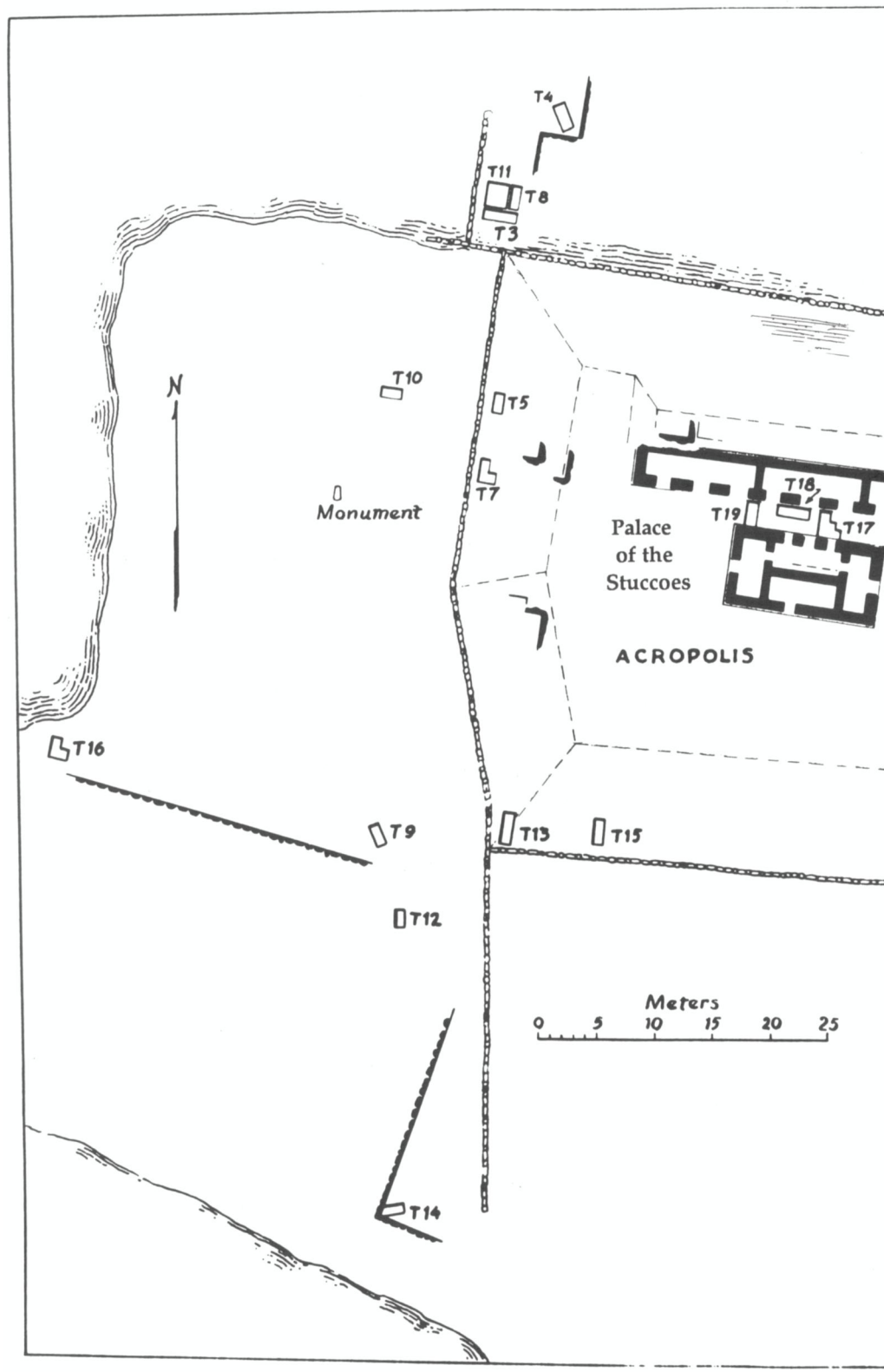


Fig. 8 Plan of Acropolis and adjacent areas. After Brainerd 1958: map 8b.

Fig. 9 Acropolis, east side, view from below with Strs. 1 and 2. Photograph by the author, 1983.

Fig. 10 Str. 1, north facade, looking east. Photograph by Sheba Haner, 1981.

Fig. 11 Strs. 1 and 2, looking northwest. Photograph by Sheba Haner, 1981.

not mentioned by Fernández and does not appear in Andrews' drawing. Marquina's rendition of the north facade, however, takes into account Fernández' description of the two lateral doors which had at some point been covered over and converted into lattice-work "windows" (cf. von Winning 1985: fig. 2). The stucco material used to create the windows is different from that of the facade above, suggesting that the windows were constructed later (Fernández 1939: 253).

Dating the Palace of the Stuccoes

In 1941–42 E. W. Andrews IV and George Brainerd explored Acanceh as part of a survey of sites near Merida. In an attempt to date both the pyramid and the Palace of the Stuccoes, several trenches were made at the base of the Acropolis and in front of the Palace, and ceramic samples were collected (Andrews IV 1942, 1965; Brainerd 1958). Andrews discovered that the platform on which the Palace stood was extended to the north at least twice, and not long afterwards the second structure was built opposite it. The floor level between the two buildings was raised five times before both structures were filled with rubble and covered over to serve as the foundation for later buildings (Fig. 13). Although no standing architecture remains from the later construction phase, carved stone facade ornaments and veneer wall blocks attest to a Pure Florescent date (ca. A.D. 800–1000), according to the chronological sequence developed for the northern lowlands by Andrews IV (1942: 258; 1965: 296).[7] For reasons to

[7] All dates are based on the Goodman-Martínez-Thompson correlation, according to which the Maya *katun* 11.16.0.0.0 ended in A.D. 1539. There is continuing debate on the validity

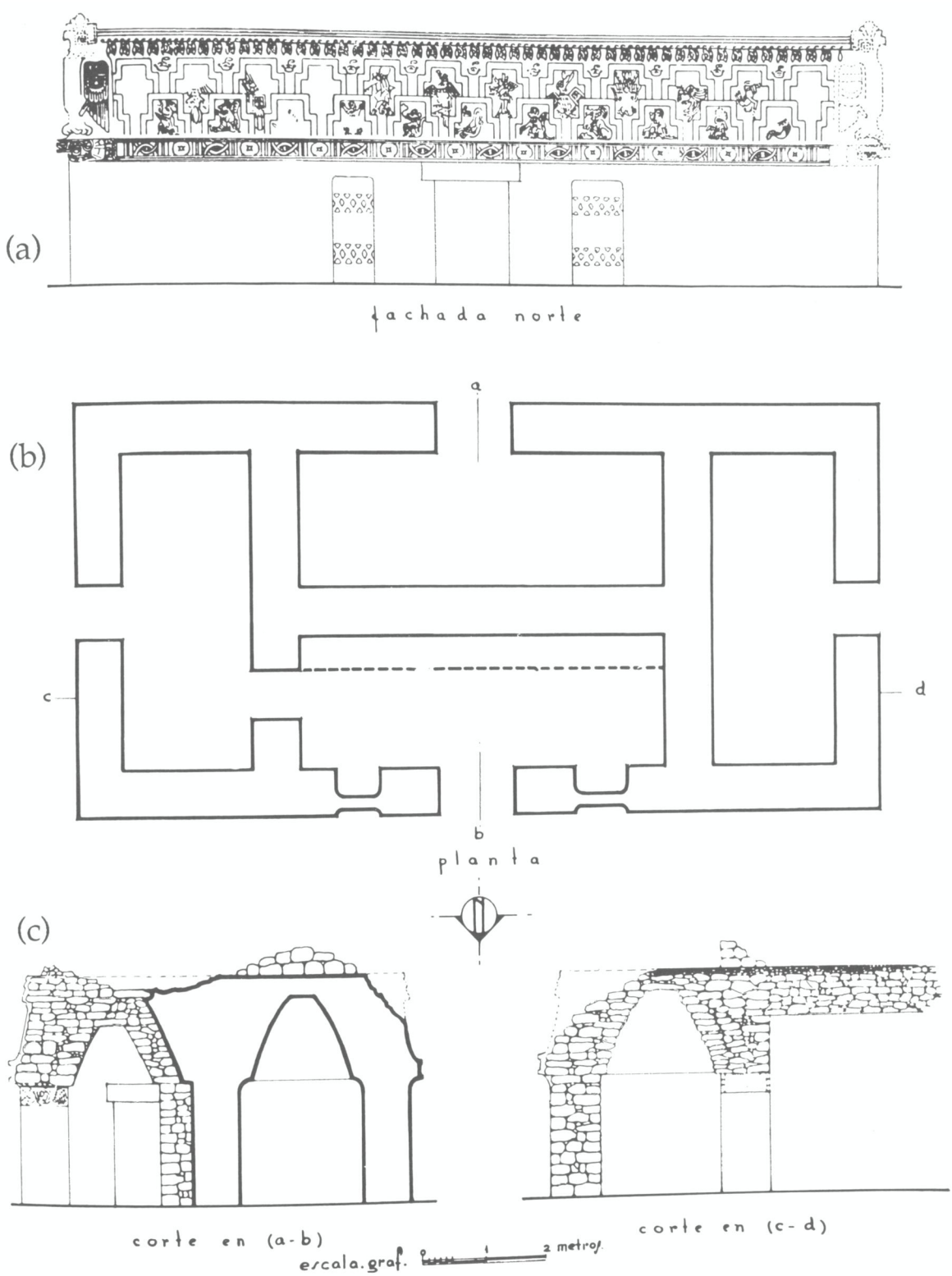


Fig. 12 Str. 1: (a) north elevation; (b) plan; (c) north-south section (left), east-west section (right). After Marquina 1951: pl. 243.

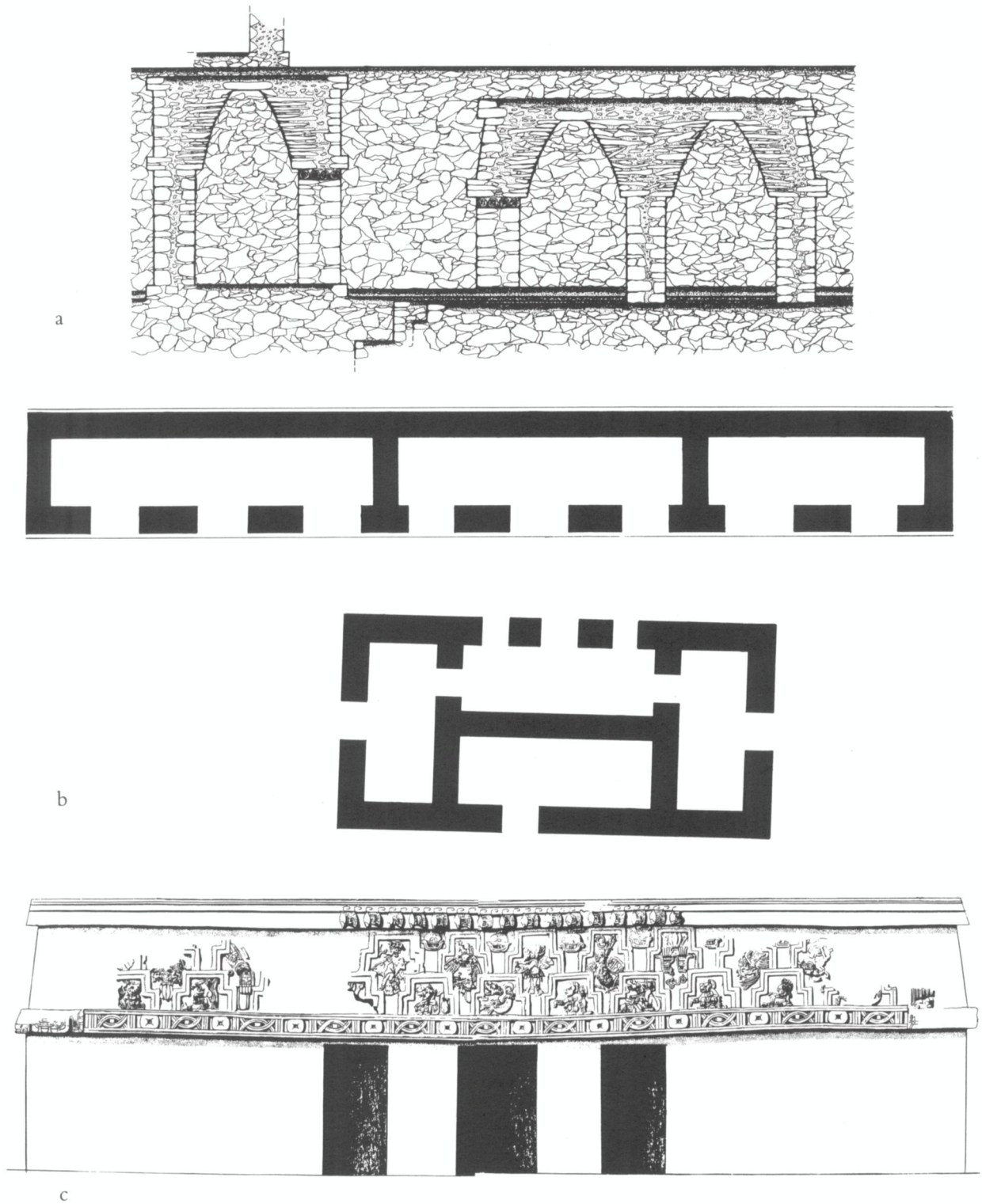


Fig. 13 Strs. 1 and 2: (a) section; (b) plan; (c) elevation. Drawings courtesy of E. Wyllys Andrews V.

be discussed below, Andrews estimated that the Palace had been built in Early Period I (ca. A.D. 250–600). Although Brainerd's analysis of the ceramics also supported an early date for the Palace of the Stuccoes, his evidence, as he himself admitted, was somewhat tenuous. The latest sherds from the floors predating the second structure but postdating the Palace showed similarities to ceramics from Oxkintok, where an Initial Series date of 9.2.0.0.0 (A.D. 475) had been found on a lintel (Brainerd 1951: 72). It is not known, however, if the Oxkintok ceramics are contemporaneous with the lintel, and the collections may date from as late as 9.8.0.0.0. (A.D. 593) (Brainerd 1958: 20). Furthermore, the time span between the Palace of the Stuccoes at Acanceh and the fill from which the samples were taken is also unknown. The presence of Teotihuacan ceramics, noted by Charnay in the main plaza mounds, was not mentioned by Brainerd in his description of the Acropolis samples.

Andrews IV (1942: 258) cited the rough masonry, spalled and thickly coated with plaster, the simple moldings, the use of stucco, and the absence of veneer and mosaic stone designs as support for his Early Period I date (Fig. 14). Andrews V, however, has recently dated the Palace of the Stuccoes in Early Period II, perhaps between A.D. 600–700 (Andrews and Andrews 1980: 146).[8] His suggested revision is based on observations of the architecture of Dzibilchaltun, about 40 km north of Acanceh, which was excavated between 1956 and 1975. Brainerd (1958: 18–19) had already noted strong similarities between the ceramics of the two sites: he points out, for example, that Acanceh Red on Thin Gray ware is indistinguishable to the eye from the same ware at Dzibilchaltun (produced during Brainerd's Regional period, ca. A.D. 200–700).

Fig. 14 Str. 1, arch between east and north chambers. Note spalled masonry. Photograph by R. H. Thompson, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

The well-known Temple of the Seven Dolls (Str. 1-sub), which shares some features with the Palace of the Stuccoes at Acanceh, has been dated about A.D. 700 (Andrews and Andrews 1980: 125) (Fig. 15). Both structures have sloping upper facades covered with stucco decoration and framed by single-member rectangular moldings, in contrast to the vertical upper facades, carved-stone decoration, and complex moldings of the Pure Florescent. Both upper facades display large stucco motifs which wrap around the corners of the facade: masks at Dzibilchaltun and giant birds at Acanceh. The same method for creating roughened surfaces in stucco, to be discussed below, is reported at both sites. Finally, both structures

of this correlation, particularly for the northern lowlands. For recent discussions of the controversy, see Andrews IV and Andrews V (1980: 275–285) and Kelley (1983). Related to and compounding this issue is the question of how much the Terminal Classic (Andrews' Pure Florescent) and the Early Post-Classic (Modified Florescent) Periods overlapped each other in Yucatan, particularly at the pivotal site of Chichen Itza. While most scholars now see at least some overlap between the two, others, notably Lincoln (1986), argue for total overlap, with no major ceramic or architectural disjunction between the two. The latter model also argues against the long-accepted idea of a Toltec invasion of Yucatan. Because of the proliferation of terminology for phases in the northern lowlands and the general lack of agreement on dates, the chronology proposed by Andrews IV (1965) and modified by Andrews IV and Andrews V (1980) will generally be used here for the northern lowlands. For the rest of the Maya area and for Mesoamerica in general, Early Classic, Late Classic, Terminal Classic, and Post-Classic will be adopted. The term "Epiclassic" is defined in note 9 below.

[8] Von Winning (1985: 10) also suggested an Early Period II date of A.D. 650–800 to the building, although he was apparently unfamiliar with the redating of the Palace by Andrews V.

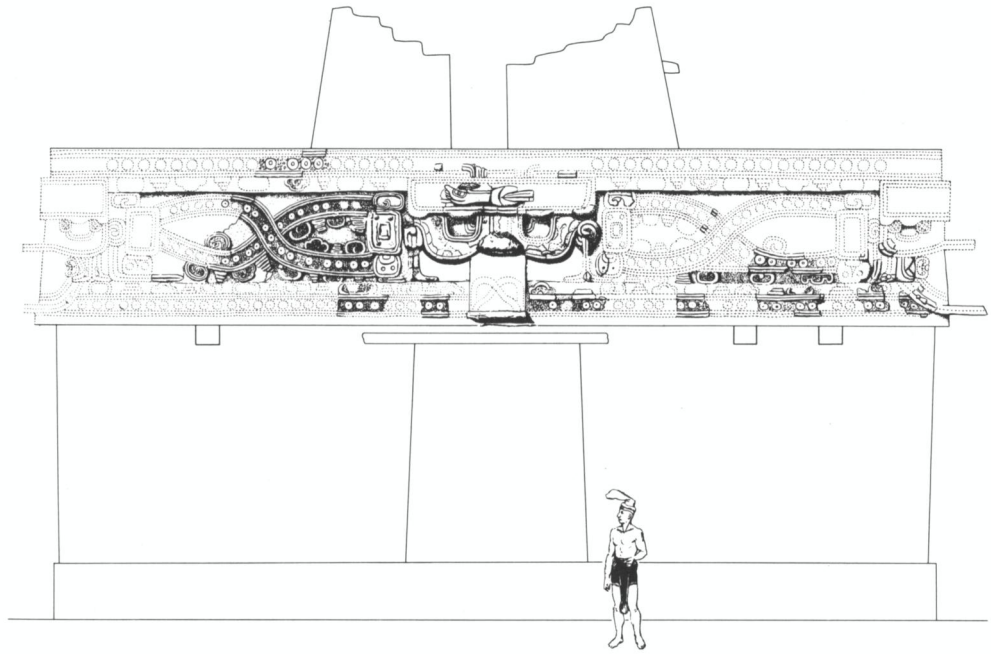


Fig. 15 Dzibilchaltun, Str. 1, south elevation. After Coggins 1983: fig. 7.

were preserved by the construction of later buildings over them.

Nevertheless, the architectural and decorative similarities between Str. 1-sub and the Palace of the Stuccoes are quite limited. At Dzibilchaltun, large stucco masks over the corners and doorways of the temple are linked by intertwined serpentine bands studded with stylized aquatic motifs (Fig. 15). The Acanceh frieze, on the other hand, displays rows of anthropomorphized and naturalistic birds and animals. Unlike other structures at Dzibilchaltun and elsewhere in the Maya area where stucco decoration was brilliantly painted, often in several colors, Str. 1-sub was left white (Coggins 1983: 9).

The few other remaining structures with upper facades in stucco in the northern lowlands are probably of Early Period I date, but for the most part are quite unlike either Dzibilchaltun or Acanceh (Andrews and Andrews 1980: 125). An Early Period structure at Mulchic in the Puuc region displays the remains of figures in stucco, for example (Piña Chan 1962: pl. III). A five-room building at Yaxcopoil had an upper facade of polychrome stucco in deep relief, of which no description or illustration seems to exist (Andrews IV 1942: 260; Andrews V, personal communication, 1982). The recently discovered ruin of Xulha, Quintana Roo, includes a structure once ornamented with a stucco band of intertwined serpents and smaller anthropomorphic images enclosed within frames (Mayer 1987). A painted stucco frieze exhibiting Teotihuacan motifs—notably, framed stars bordered by lines suggesting water—has been found at Othon P. Blanco, Quintana Roo, and may provide an important comparison for Acanceh (Cortés de Basdefer 1988). Other Early Period structures that have painted stucco sculpture are discussed by Kowalski (1985).

The lack of appropriate architectural comparisons, coupled with the limited archaeological data from the site, makes more precise dating of the Palace of the Stuccoes difficult. However, both the style and the iconography of the stucco facade support the proposed Early Period II construction date.

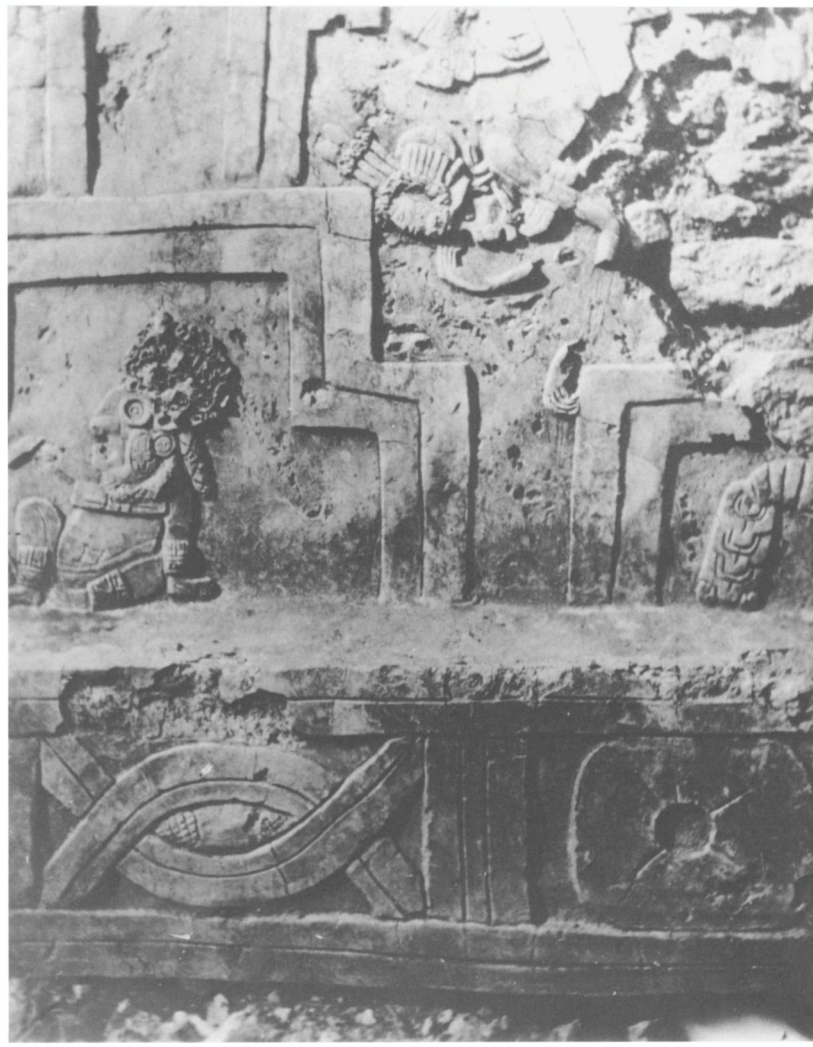


Fig. 16 Character 20 (upper right). Note incised lines in plaster where the monkey's right arm has fallen away. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Material and Techniques of the Stucco Facade

The roughly finished stones forming the facade of the building were first coated with a thick layer of lime plaster. Although there is no remaining evidence for preparatory drawings beneath the stucco reliefs, a photograph of the now-destroyed descending monkey shows that lines were scratched into the damp plaster to indicate the placement of limbs (Fig. 16, left arm).

The figures were then modeled in stucco, sometimes several centimeters thick, without a stone armature as is used, for example, at Palenque (Robertson 1975). The creatures are sensitively modeled with rounded, fleshy limbs; volume is subtly suggested through varying depths of relief. Interior details like costume elements and the shafts of feathers were incised into damp plaster. Breton (1908) first noted the unusual technique of using masses of stucco filled with chipped limestone flakes to imitate the texture of feathers (Fig. 17, character 14) and to form the odd turban-like headdresses worn by characters 8 and 19 (Fig. 2, left;

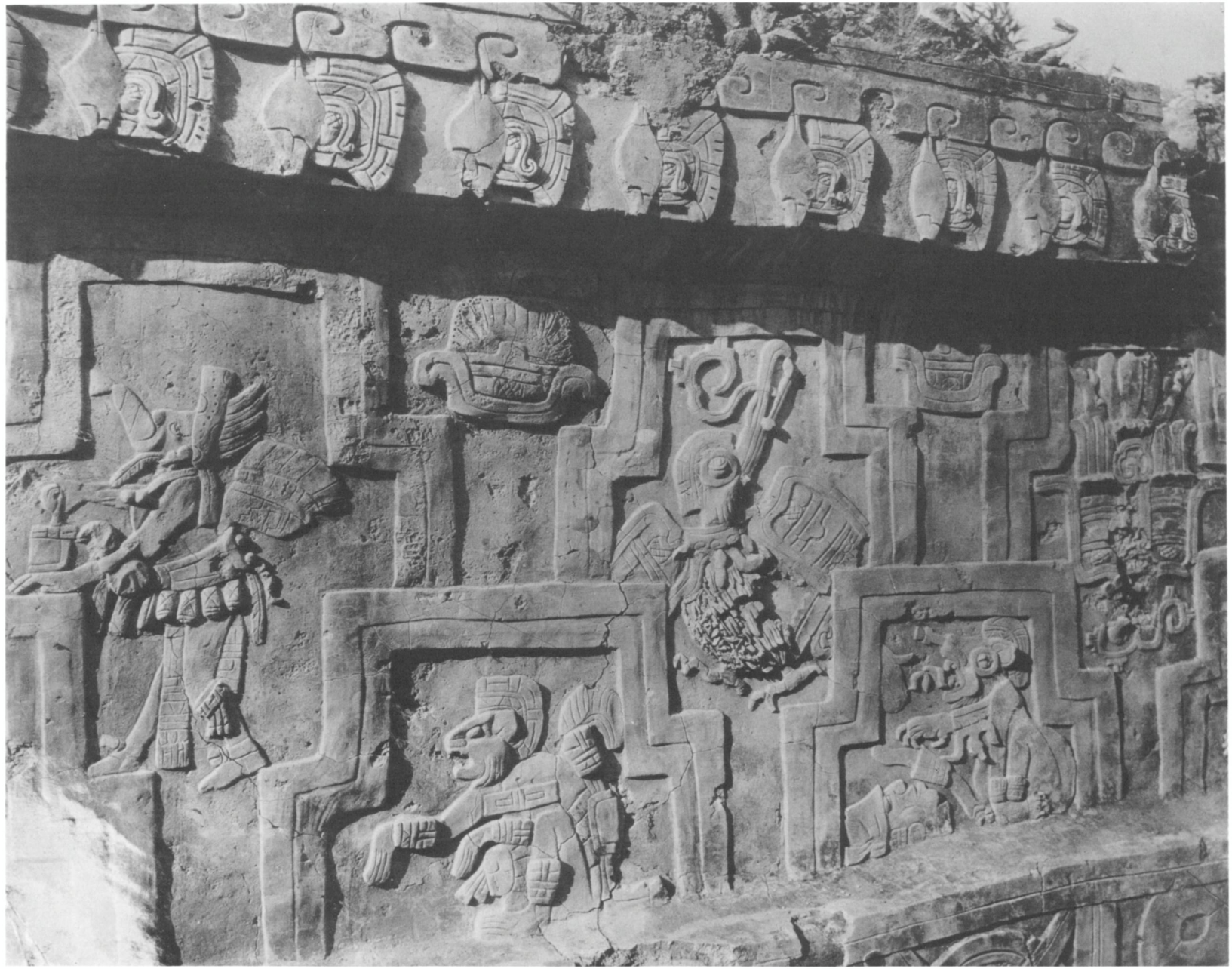


Fig. 17 Characters 12–16. Photograph by Teobert Maler, 1908, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Fig. 16, left). The same technique is reported for the stucco decoration of Str. 1-sub at Dzibilchaltun (Coggins 1983: 14–15) and appears to be unique to these two northern Maya sites.

According to both early descriptions of the frienze and Adela Breton's watercolors, the facade was vividly painted, its colors preserved by whitewash, rubble, and later construction. Against a red background appear different hues of red, blue, green, yellow, brown, and white. Traces of color, notably red, blue or green, and possibly yellow, can still be seen. The application of the colors in flat washes without blending or the suggestion of modeling has been compared to mural painting of the same period at Teotihuacan, Monte Alban, and Uaxactun (Kowalski 1985: 55).

CHAPTER 2

Description of the Stucco Frieze

Introduction

In theme and style, the frieze of the Palace of the Stuccoes is unlike any other extant architectural relief in the Maya area. Animals and birds dominate its iconographic program. Although animals are often featured in mythical scenes on Maya vases, in Classic sculpture and wallpainting they are rarely represented and always in secondary roles. Surviving architectural reliefs from the late Pre-Classic through the Late Classic, whether in stucco or stone, emphasize deity masks, human figures, and conventionalized symbols: only in the Post-Classic, at Chichen Itza, are specific animals like jaguars and eagles introduced as significant sculptural motifs. The absence of animal imagery in monumental form may, of course, be a result of accidents of preservation, particularly in the case of stucco and especially in the northern lowlands where stone replaced stucco as the favored decorative material during the Pure Florescent period. A man and a deer can be seen on the Mulchic structure mentioned above, and at Kabah two large birds were modeled in stucco over an interior doorway (Stephens 1843, 1: fig. 24; Pollock 1980: 168–170). Nevertheless, Acanceh can be considered the single existing Classic Maya facade displaying a procession of animals.

A striking feature of the frieze pointed out by early observers is the representation of motifs strongly recalling central Mexican iconography (Seler 1911; Spinden 1913: 213). The stucco relief has often been cited, in fact, as an example of Teotihuacan influence or even presence in the northern Maya lowlands (Proskouriakoff 1965: 475; Kubler 1984: 287; M. Coe 1987: 84; R. Millon 1988: 128–129; Freer n.d.). On closer examination, however, it becomes evident that some of the alleged Teotihuacan elements have no counterparts at the highland site or have been so transformed that they resist cultural pigeonholing. Nevertheless, the non-Maya quality of the frieze cannot be disputed, even if the sources and means of transmission of the foreign elements remain unclear.

While it is the unusual iconography of the stucco relief that has received the most attention in the past, other aspects deserve attention. To begin with, the use of modeled and painted stucco for architectural decoration is typically Maya, but the composition of the frieze is not. For example, the motifs represented are not arranged hierarchically with major and subordinate figures, nor is the most important element or scene placed over the central doorway. There is none of the sense of narrative that is found in most Maya figurative wallpainting, either. Instead, the characters are facing in the same direction (east), recalling the axiality of animal processions on Maya vase painting. Nevertheless, they are enclosed in frames which isolate them from one another and preclude narrative interaction among them.

The use of frames, as well as the arrangement of anthropomorphic animals in rows across a wall surface, recalls Teotihuacan rather than Maya painting: the murals of Atetelco come to mind. But Teotihuacan painting is characterized by repetition or alternation rather than variety in the representation of human and animal forms: the individuality of the figures here is more typical of

Maya style. The naturalistic proportions of the characters, their seated positions, and their varied and human gestures are also Maya. As a result, the creatures do not appear to be merely static emblems frozen on the facade, but animated participants in a ritual procession.

The facade's eclectic iconography and style may well represent a northern Maya manifestation of the cultural mix that characterizes much of Mesoamerican art and architecture during what has sometimes been called the Epiclassic period (ca. A.D. 700–900).[9] While it is particularly striking in its later phases at highland sites like Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, this cosmopolitanism can also be seen in the Maya area during the same period. Although for a long time the resemblance between Tula and Chichen Itza was viewed as the primary manifestation of central Mexican-Yucatecan interaction, there is increasing evidence that the northern Maya enjoyed a continuing relationship with the central highlands, beginning at least as early as the Early Classic and continuing, with varying degrees of intensity, through the Late Classic as well (V. Miller n.d.).[10]

Although the impact of Teotihuacan is more pervasive and more dramatic at Kaminaljuyu and Tikal during the Early Classic, sites farther north also demonstrate ties with central Mexico in art and architecture. A well-known example is the remarkable ceramic cache from Becan consisting of a tripod vessel, possibly of highland Guatemalan origin (Ball 1977: 101), containing a Teotihuacan style hollow statuette within which were placed smaller figurines, all of which display at least some Teotihuacan characteristics. This cache, apparently of mid-sixth-century date, was deposited in the ruins of an elite residential compound over which a structure of possible talud-tablero construction was built (Ball 1979: 274). Other central highland products like obsidian had already appeared at the site by the third or fourth century (Ball 1977: 170).

Another example of Early Classic central Mexican influence in the northern lowlands is the recently uncovered mural at Xelha which depicts a frontal figure, unmistakably if somewhat crudely painted in imitation of a Teotihuacan mural (Lombardo de Ruiz 1987: pl. 350). This painting has been dated stylistically to ca. A.D. 400–600, a date supported by Tzakol 2 ceramics found in a closed context within the building housing the mural (Pérez and Toscano n.d.).[11]

Meanwhile, at Teotihuacan itself there is now evidence of imported Maya pottery, mostly of Early Classic date and largely from the northern Maya lowlands (Rattray n.d.; Ball 1983: 131, 137–138). Very few Maya sherds of earlier or later periods are present, and in general Teotihuacan resisted being influenced by Maya (or any other foreign) art styles (cf. Nagao 1989: 98).

The reappearance of Teotihuacan iconography in the Maya area during the decline and fall of that city has been noted around 9.13.0.0.0. (A.D. 692), the time of the proposed construction date of Acanceh's Palace of the Stuccoes. This "Mexicanizing cultural renascence" is especially evident at Tikal but is also present at other lowland sites, including Dzibilchaltun (Coggins 1983: 41–43). Structure 612 at that site, originally a platform with an unvaulted superstructure, was rebuilt sometime in the early seventh century as a talud-tablero platform (Andrews IV and Andrews V 1980; 74).[12] Unlike other Mesoamerican talud-

[9] The concept of the Epiclassic was introduced by Jiménez Moreno (1966) and refined by Webb (1978). Several essays in Pasztory (1978) examine cross-cultural issues in Mesoamerica, but mostly of the Middle Classic period (A.D. 400–700) (Parsons 1969), immediately preceding the Epiclassic. A recent collection of papers (Diehl and Berlo 1989) looks at developments in Mesoamerica between the fall of Teotihuacan and the rise of Tula. While the editors of that volume reject the use of the term at all, preferring the unwieldy "Phase One of the Second Intermediate Period" (Diehl and Berlo 1989: 3), I feel that "Epiclassic" remains a useful concept. Cohodas (1989: 237), for example, uses it to separate the "final transformation of Classic period culture in Mesoamerica from the Terminal Classic period, in which Post-Classic patterns are initiated." Since the date of these changes varies from region to region (Teotihuacan collapsed well before Maya cities began to fall, for example), "Epiclassic" is a useful term for encompassing both the end of one period and the beginning of another. It is not only a time marker, but also a reference to the cosmopolitan nature of Mesoamerican interactions during this time.

[10] See Pasztory 1988, note 1, for possible Late Pre-Classic Maya parallels with Teotihuacan architecture, architectural decoration, and site planning.

[11] The ceramic phases established for Uaxactun in the Peten that correspond to the Early and Late Classic are Tzakol 1, 2, and 3 and Tepeu 1, 2, and 3, with Tepeu 1 beginning about A.D. 600 (Smith and Gifford 1965: fig. 2). In the northern lowlands, Tzakol is approximately coeval with Early Period I, while Tepeu 1 and 2 are coeval with Early Period II.

[12] For a discussion of the extension of talud-tablero architecture in both time and space, see Kowalski (n.d.).

tablero constructions, which tend to deviate considerably from standard Teotihuacan proportions, this one has a talud-tablero ratio not far off the Teotihuacan average of 3:1. While it is the only excavated structure of this period at Dzibilchaltun to display talud-tablero construction, it has been suggested that further excavations might reveal others (Andrews V 1979: 243). Furthermore, evidence has been presented to suggest that the plan of Classic Dzibilchaltun, established around A.D. 700, is conceptually comparable to that of Teotihuacan (Coggins 1983: 60). Indeed, in the period following the introduction of central Mexican elements in Dzibilchaltun's architecture, there was a shift from the typical Maya orientation to the cardinal points to one of about 17 degrees east of north that corresponds more closely to central Mexican sites (Andrews V 1979: 244–245).

The reasons for the revival of Teotihuacan architecture and imagery in lowland Maya art and architecture are still unclear. According to one theory, it represents a "cyclically determined reenactment" of Early Classic Teotihuacan intrusions and calendrical innovations in the southern lowlands thirteen *katuns* earlier (Coggins 1983: 41). The evidence for the existence of a Maya-style calendar at Teotihuacan remains weak, however. Another hypothesis connects Teotihuacan iconography to a sacrificial bloodletting complex that is prevalent in Late Classic monumental sculpture (Schele 1984: 30–33). While it cannot be determined if the Palace of the Stuccoes was built in commemoration of *katun* 9.13.0.0.0, it will be demonstrated that bloodletting imagery is indeed present in the facade decoration. Teotihuacan iconography seems to come into play in the Maya Late Classic when local elites wish to separate themselves from their subjects and to engage in unpopular behavior, such as warfare and human sacrifice (Stone 1989). Since the absence of texts and ruler portraits at Acanceh precludes reconstructing its dynastic history, however, a political motivation for the creation of the stucco frieze remains an interesting speculation. Nevertheless, the combination of Teotihuacan imagery and bloodletting motifs at Acanceh may be the northern counterpart of similar juxtapositions in the art of southern Maya sites of the same epoch, such as Piedras Negras (cf. Stone 1989).

Although the evidence is still scant, it has often been proposed that the Gulf Coast was the corridor through which Teotihuacan goods and ideas passed on their way to the Maya area. Recent excavations at the site of Matacapan in the Tuxtla Mountains of southern Veracruz have revealed a substantial Teotihuacan presence as well as large quantities of Maya trade wares (Santley 1983: 77; Santley, Ortiz, and Pool 1987). In addition to locally made copies of Teotihuacan ceramic types, at least one talud-tablero structure and what may be Teotihuacan style residential architecture are also found in the Teotihuacan barrio at the site. The central Mexican presence at the site appears to date from about A.D. 400–600 and was most likely motivated by trade considerations involving imported obsidian, local stone for groundstone tools, and nearby kaolin deposits (Santley, Ortiz, and Pool 1987: 46–47). While no other excavated southern Gulf Coast sites display such a strong Teotihaucan presence, future explorations may provide more evidence for the passage of Teotihuacanos—or their ideology—through the area.

The Palace of the Stuccoes at Acanceh seems to have been built well after the initial impact of Teotihuacan on the Maya area, however, during a period of locally determined adaptations of long-established central Mexican motifs and themes. By the end of the Epiclassic, if not sooner, Maya motifs and Maya style finally appear in central Mexican art, notably at Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, perhaps indicating a change in the political and economic balance between highlands and lowlands after the decline of Teotihuacan. The well-known Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent at the hilltop center of Xochicalco displays seated Maya lords who closely resemble those depicted on the so-called Nebaj jades found scattered throughout Mesoamerica (Fig. 18).[13] But they have the elaborate speech scrolls that are diagnostic of highland cultures, and are seated within the undulating

[13] Adela Breton's watercolor of this panel can be seen in color in Giles and Stewart 1989, pl. 49.

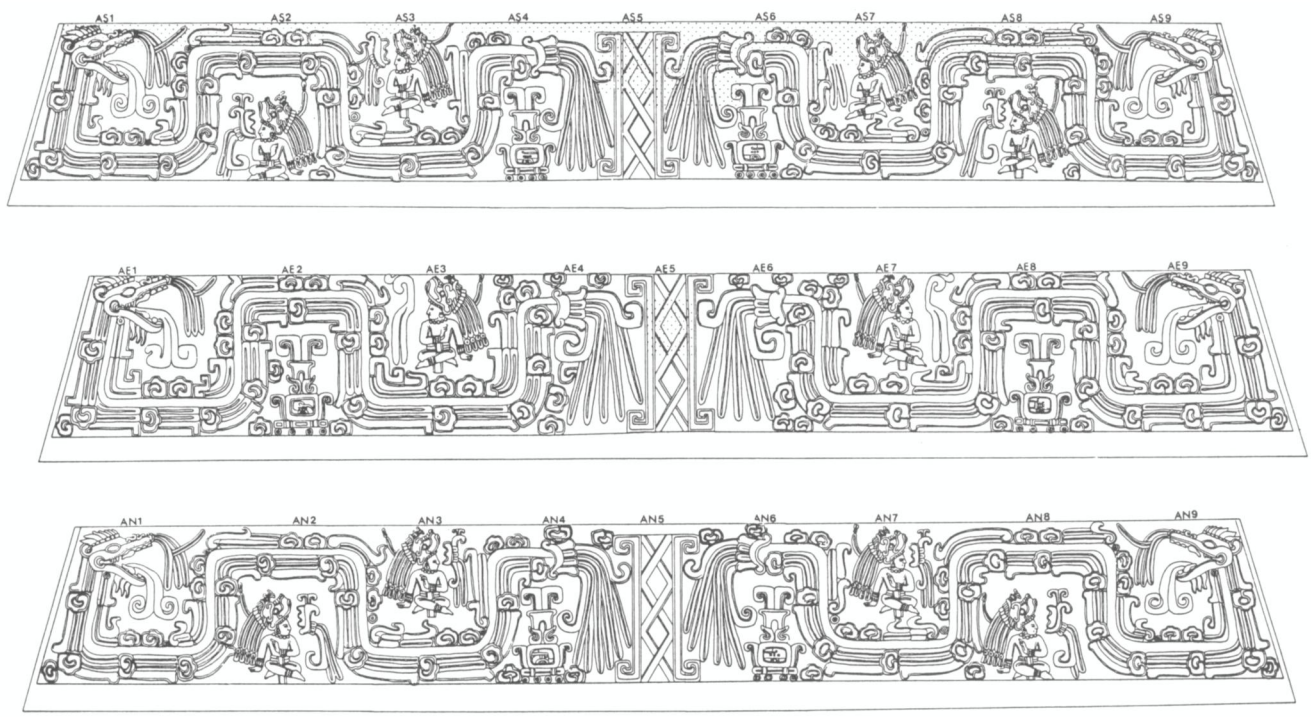


Fig. 18 Xochicalco, Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent. After V. Smith n.d.: fig. 1.

curves of a great feathered serpent. Here and on the three stelae at the site, central Mexican hieroglyphs are used. The double outline typical of Classic Veracruz art may also be present in these reliefs. Although Xochicalco was apparantly only a "small urban center with regional, ceremonial, and administrative responsibilities" for an area including western Morelos and northern Guerrero (Hirth 1984: 585), its artists looked much farther afield and to the south and east for their sources.

The unexpected find of the spectacular murals of Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala confirmed that the Maya played a much stronger role during the Epiclassic than had previously been suspected. Here, ethnic Maya clad in bird costumes fall in apparent defeat to jaguar-suited non-Maya in a battle scene reminiscent of that of Bonampak in its frenzied movement and graphic detail (Fig. 19). This scene, as well as the portico murals in an adjoining building, is painted in naturalistic Maya style but is accompanied by Teotihuacan motifs (such as Tlaloc faces) and unidentified hieroglyphs.

While scholars continue to debate the ethnicity of the inhabitants of Cacaxtla and the participants in the murals, there can be no doubt that Maya painters, or at least artists trained by the Maya, were responsible for the paintings. Whether the murals were commissioned to lend legitimacy and prestige to a parvenu elite occupying Cacaxtla (D. McVicker 1985: 92), or as tribute demanded from the Maya losers (Schele and Miller 1986: 220; Nagao 1989: 99), they indicate that a strong relationship continued between central highland Mexico and the lowland Maya after the collapse of the Teotihuacan polity. Acanceh may well represent a southern manifestation of the enduring links between the two regions during the Epiclassic.

The Moldings

Decorative moldings in stucco or stone are a characteristic feature of northern Maya architecture. Projecting moldings with the remains of stucco ornamentation can still be seen on the contemporaneous Str. 1-sub at Dzibilchaltun, for ex-

Fig. 19 Cacaxtla, Structure B, substructure, west talud. Battle scene with figure in star cloak. Drawing courtesy of Donald McVicker.

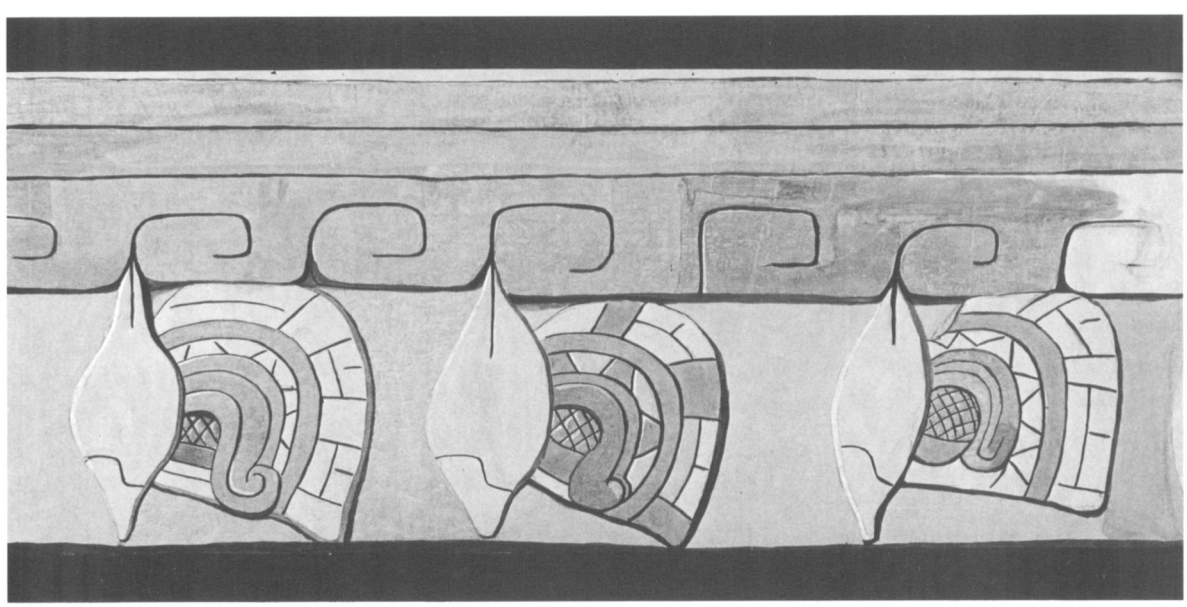


Fig. 20 Superior molding, detail. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186c. Length 41.5 cm.

ample (Coggins 1983: fig. 24). The Acanceh moldings, however, are unlike any other extant Maya decorative moldings.

Of the superior and medial moldings, only the former remains today. Breton left partly colored drawings of the design on the superior molding (Fig. 20; Pl. 1) and of the now-destroyed lower one. The upper molding consists of a blue band incised with volutes, a symbol for water at Teotihuacan and elsewhere.[14] Abbreviated waterbands can also be seen on the neck pendants and wings of some of the characters below. From this band are suspended elaborately decorated oval objects, which have been identified as variations on the Teotihuacan eye-and-drop motif (von Winning 1947: 338). The oval drop is crossed by a wavy line, one of several infixes identified in drops represented at Teotihuacan (Langley 1986: 247). Others (e.g., Freer n.d.) have seen these ovals as shells rather than drops. Despite their resemblance to the *Oliva* shells frequently worn by Maya rulers depicted on stelae and reproduced in clay at Teotihuacan (von Winning 1987, 2, chap. 1: fig. 10b), they lack the conventional spiral at one end that identifies these shells. Feathered shells are represented at Teotihuacan, but the shells tend to be easily recognizable, more elaborate conches.

The red, blue, and yellow fanlike ornament, possibly precious stones and feathers, that surrounds the drop is very like the headdresses worn by a number of the characters below: note, for example, the ornamentation around the rattlesnake's eye (Fig. 32, character 11).

At Teotihuacan, the eye-and-drop motif often occurs in conjunction with, but separate from, the waterband (Fig. 21, but cf. von Winning 1947: fig. 1k for a ceramic fragment in which the two are attached). It is occasionally ornamented, but never as elaborately as the Acanceh example. This waterband, then, is an excellent example of the adaptation and elaboration of a Teotihuacan motif in a Maya context, recalling the outer border of the north portico mural at Cacaxtla which illustrates Teotihuacan water creatures depicted with Maya naturalism (D. McVicker 1985: 84, fig. 3).

In Teotihuacan painting, waterbands appear as borders around murals and are painted on the frames of tableros. Water drops occur in many contexts: flowing from hands, attached to streams, plants, and other objects, or as isolated motifs (Fig. 21). The two motifs presumably relate to rain, water, fertility, and abundance—important themes at Teotihuacan. The eye is probably adjectival, adding "shining," "brilliant," or some other attribute to the water. Von Winning suggests that the eye-and-drop corresponds to a Teotihuacan feathered-eye glyph which he believes means spring (cf. Spanish *ojo de agua,* which he reads as the Castilian translation of a Pre-Hispanic expression). The feathers are added to make it sacred water (von Winning 1987, 2: 70–71). Since feathers, jade, and other luxury materials are lavishly applied to serpents, jaguars, and other animals and things, they must impart rank or some quality like "preciousness" to the thing represented (Kubler 1967: 6, 9). The upper molding at Acanceh, then, symbolically depicts water as precious, sacred, and beneficial.[15]

The medial molding is more recognizably Maya, taking the form of a double-headed serpent (Fig. 3).[16] The body of the serpent is marked with two alternating signs: curving bands crossed over cross-hatched circles separated by three vertical bands from a disk with a center hole. The last motif most closely resembles the Maya glyphic prefix *po* ("mat" in Maya and part of the honorific title *ah po* "he of the mat") (Lounsbury 1973). The upper and lower borders of the molding were painted blue, as were the crossed bands and the disks. The vertical bands separating the signs

[14] Von Winning (1985: 13) suggests that this row of scrolls represents rain-bringing clouds.

[15] Von Winning (1985: 36, fig. 41) describes the band as representing "the face of a deity peering from the sky, symbolizing the celestial aspect of Itzam Na as the bringer of the rains." There is, however, nothing to link these symbolic eye-and-drop motifs specifically to Itzamna or any other Maya deity.

[16] Nevertheless, the idea of serpent-as-frame is also present at Teotihuacan, on the miniature temple of Atetelco, for example (A. Miller 1973: figs. 346–349). A mural without provenience exhibits painted feathered serpents undulating over a series of trees (Berrin 1988: pls. 1A–F). From their jaws pour liquid streams marked with the wave motif as well as the eye-and-drop motif.

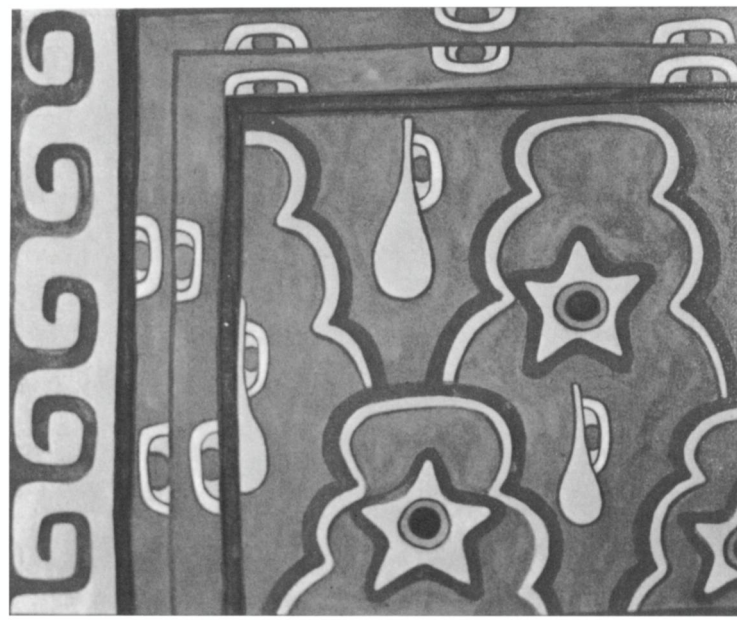


Fig. 21 Teotihuacan, Zacuala patios, Room 2, Mural 5. Detail of eye-and-drop motif. After A. Miller 1973: fig. 226.

were yellow with a red band in the center, while the background and the centers of both signs were painted red. While the motifs represented are like those appearing on Maya skybands, this particular combination seems to be unique.[17] Furthermore, unlike the simple crossed bands usually represented in skybands, these enclose red, cross-hatched circles like those shown in the containers just below the superior molding (Fig. 32).

Although by the time Seler's drawing was made the western serpent head had disappeared, the upside-down eastern one was still visible.[18] According to Seler's rendition (Fig. 3), it has a large round eye, half-covered by the striated membrane commonly seen in Maya serpents, surmounted by a supraorbital plate ending in a curl behind the eye. This curl is echoed by the larger scroll below that emerges from or frames the back of the mouth. Seler's drawing of the snout and jaw is not entirely clear, although he interprets it as another skyband wrapping around the corner of the building (Seler 1911: 1016). What appears to be the beginning of a row of teeth is just visible beneath the snout, at the edge of the damaged area at the corner of the structure (Fig. 3).

The lower jaw and the snout are covered with what look like a net design, somewhat like the twined netting commonly worn by felines represented in Teotihuacan art (Fig. 22). I know of no other examples of netted serpents in either Maya or Teotihuacan art, however, and it is unfortunate that Breton did not leave a drawing of the serpent head. In a recent dissertation, David Brown (n.d.: 257 ff) has attempted to demonstrate that the representation of netted jaguars at Teotihuacan is based on both a stylization of the cat's pelt markings and a complex of homophonous and synonymous words related to "net" and "jaguar" in Maya, the language he believes was spoken at Teotihuacan. Whether or not his argument proves correct, it is indeed true that, for the Maya, jaguars and snakes are more closely linked iconographically and linguistically than might be expected.[19] In Tzeltal, for example, the taxonomic term *chanbalam* (one translation of which is "snake/jaguar") refers to animals

[17] For the motifs represented in Maya skybands, see Collea (1981) and Carlson and Landis (1985).

[18] A photograph in the Peabody Museum photoarchives shows the remains of the back of the western serpent's headdress. Cf. von Winning 1985: fig. 9, probably drawn from the same photograph.

[19] See Bacon 1979 for a discussion of the linguistic relationship between jaguars and serpents in Maya languages.

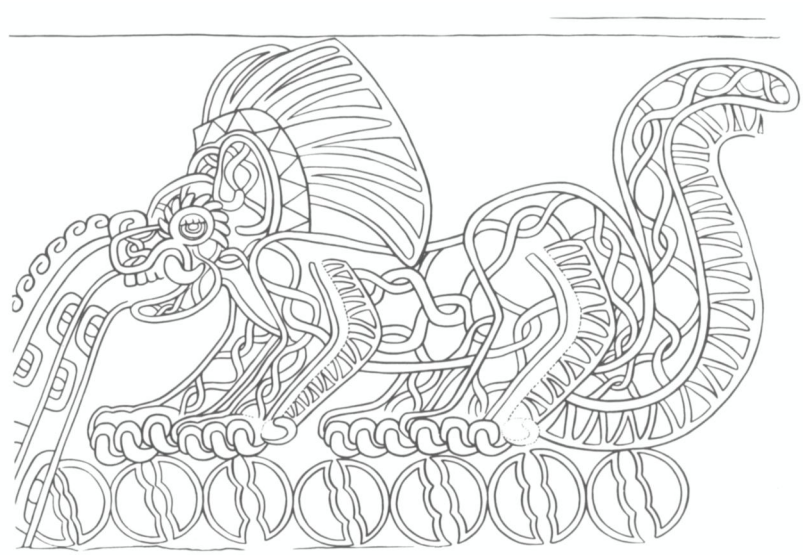


Fig. 22 Teotihuacan, Zone 11, Portico 5, Mural 5. Detail of netted feline. After A. Miller 1973: fig. 152.

in general, and more specifically to most mammals (excluding humans, bats, and armadillos) (Hunn 1977: 134). In Yucatec, an unidentified species of snake is called *balamchan* (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 32). Perhaps the best example of the visual conflation of both animals can be found at Cacaxtla, where a spotted serpent/jaguar provides an animated frame for a lord dressed in a jaguar costume (D. McVicker 1985: fig. 3).

The serpent also wears a headdress that recalls Teotihuacan rather than Maya costume design: that is, the headdress and the projection behind it are broken up into small geometric segments that might represent short, cropped feathers, plaques of jade, or other precious materials forming a mosaic pattern (cf. Fig. 22). The same kind of headdress is worn by a number of the creatures depicted below (cf. Fig. 28, character 3). Photographs and drawings from Andrews' work in 1942 (after the serpent's jaw had been destroyed) provide a few details that clarify Seler's earlier rendition (Fig. 13, far left; Fig. 23). The interior of the projecting motif at the back of the head is partly cross-hatched, for example, and there are small triangles incised in the supraorbital plate. What may be an extension of the headdress or a jeweled noseplug (cf. Fig. 32, character 11) can also be seen in this photograph, turning the corner of the building.

Despite the unusual features of this serpent, it is clearly yet another version of the double-headed sky creature that appears in many contexts in Classic Maya art. Since *can/chan,* "snake," and *caan/chan,* "sky," are homonyms in Maya, the sky is often represented by a serpent. Normally, the skyband is placed above or arched over a terrestrial scene, although basal examples are not unknown. Von Winning (1985: 15), following J. Eric Thompson in emphasizing Itzamna as the central Maya deity, interprets this band as the floor of the house of Itzamna. While the Maya pantheon is now generally considered to be more complex than Thompson's quasi-monotheistic view would allow, the idea of the skyband functioning as the floor of the Maya universe does have precedents. The now-destroyed figure of Naranjo Stela 32, for example, is enthroned on a series of stacked skybands alternating with bands marked with water-lily (*naab*) pads; a metaphor for sky and lake (also *naab*), or surface of the earth (Schele n.d) (Fig. 24).

In Maya architecture, a stucco or stone skyband may function as a frame, as at Palenque on the piers of the Temple of the Inscriptions (Robertson 1983: pl. 27) and edging the roofcomb of the Temple of the Sun (Robertson 1979: pl. 9-2), or as a base for a seated figure, as on the facade of the east wing of the Monjas at Chichen Itza (Maudslay 1889–1902, 3: pl. 1). Most comparable to the

Fig. 23 Medial molding, northeast corner. Photograph by E. W. Andrews IV, 1942, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

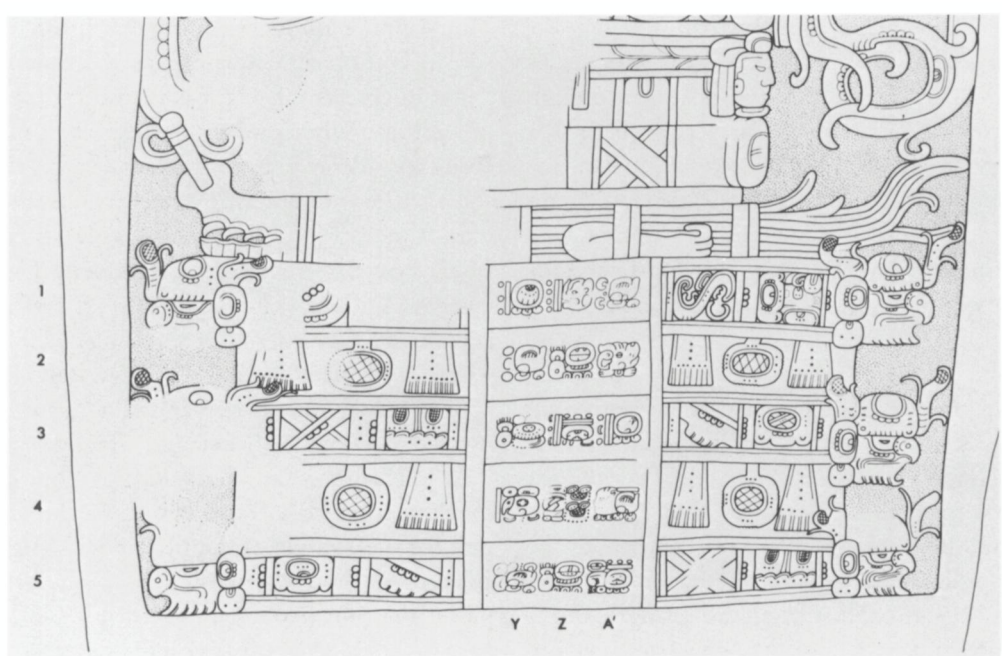


Fig. 24 Naranjo, Stela 32. Detail of throne. After Graham 1978.

Acanceh skyband is the medial molding of Structure B-4 2nd A at Altun Ha. Although the stucco decoration of this building is largely gone, the remains of various sky motifs, most notably a crossed-band element, can still be seen (Pendergast 1982: figs. 27–29). The building, which housed an important tomb and was covered by later construction, has been dated to the second half of the sixth century (Pendergast 1982: 136).

The two moldings, then, provide a kind of "bicultural" frame for the characters represented on the facade: the upper, derived perhaps from Teotihuacan wallpainting, and the lower, representing an essentially Maya concept.[20]

The Corner Motifs

The upper facades of northern Maya buildings traditionally terminate at the corners in large deity masks, usually of the Maya rain god Chac. At Acanceh, however, the masks are replaced by large stucco birds spanning the area between the superior and medial moldings. These birds, whose bodies wrapped around the corner of the building, framed the frieze and at the same time visually turned the corner of the building, perhaps leading the viewer to other stucco-decorated facades. Although by the time Seler recorded the frieze the western bird was gone, Breton did draw both as they appeared in 1907. The better preserved of the two is reproduced here (Fig. 25; Pl. 2). The western bird appears to have been essentially the same, according to Breton's watercolor and an unpublished photograph in the archives of the Peabody Museum.

Each bird has massive, raptorial claws that seem to perch on the serpent heads of the medial moldings below. While the breast feathers are indicated naturalistically by limestone flakes placed in wet stucco, the wing, ending in bright green feathers, is ornamental. It is outlined with a thick blue double border. A wider band crosses the wing, a large curl suspended from its center. Below this a curv-

[20] Coggins (1983: 42–43, note 14) points out that the bicephalic serpent occurs only at Teotihuacan between its appearances at Izapa and in the Early Classic Maya art of Tikal, citing the second-century Temple of Quetzalcoatl as a possible source for its reintroduction into the Maya area.

Fig. 25 Bird, eastern end of frieze. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8220a. 120 × 61 cm.

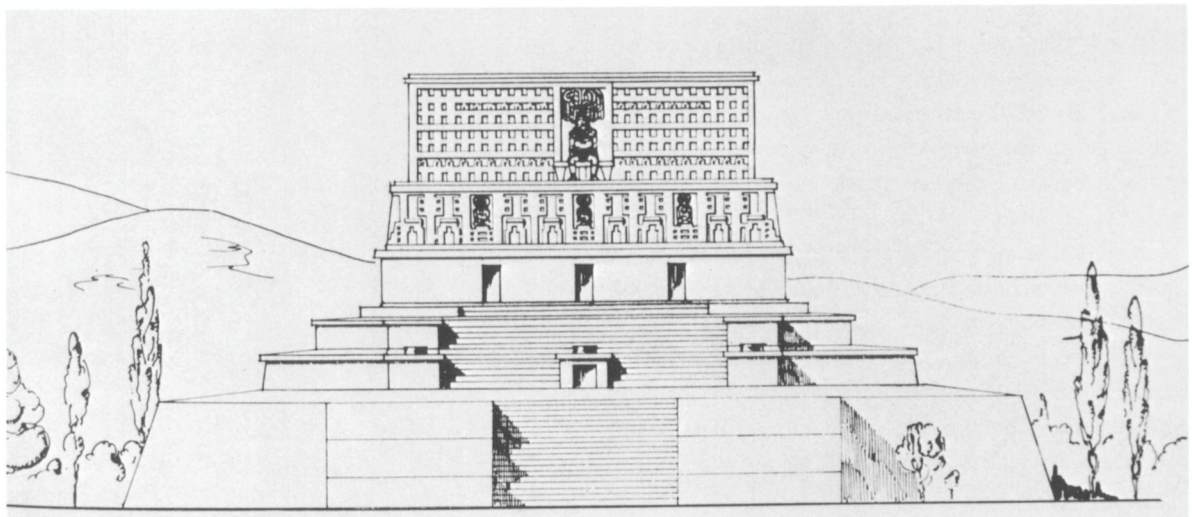


Fig. 26 Yaxchilan, Structure 33. After Marquina 1951: pl. 213.

ing cartouche, marked by the same wave motif as appears in the upper molding of the frieze, encloses a cross-hatched, red triangle. This motif, and the three cross-hatched ovals above, are in lower relief than the elements that frame them. Small yellow or cream ovals, drops perhaps, hang from the waterband over a cropped fringe of white feathers.

The missing heads and stylized wings make identification of the birds difficult. Marquina (1951: 803) refers to them as eagles and reconstructs the heads to accommodate his interpretation (Fig. 12). The reconstruction appears to be based on the upward-looking head of character 10 below (Fig. 32), however, as there was no evidence for the appearance of the birds' heads even at the time of the facade's discovery. Since the birds represented on the frieze tend to be hybrids, the corner bird may well have been one of the mythical avians common in Maya iconography, such as the *katun* bird or the *muan* bird. These birds may appear perched on world trees, or their heads are placed frontally in the center of skybands (Schele 1976: figs. 6, 7, 9, 10, 12). But in at least one example, Naranjo Stela 32, profile bird heads appear at either end of a skyband on which a ruler is seated (Fig. 24). These, then, may be larger versions of these celestial birds.

The Framing Cartouches

Each character is framed by a stepped cartouche outlined in two bands of color, usually alternating, and including green, blue, red, and yellow. Von Winning (1985: 7) provides a useful chart of the colors used, pointing out that there is no consistent pattern to the color choices. Each cartouche measures 55–58 cm in height, but at the base the lower cartouches tend to be wider, averaging 84 cm to the 74 cm width of the upper cartouches. The lower borders around the characters are missing, however, so that no figure is completely contained within the semiquatrefoil shape. These overlapping, inverted T-shaped elements create a rhythmic pattern of line and color across the facade's surface. A similar pattern is created by the overlapping scalloped motifs appearing in one Teotihuacan mural (Fig. 21). At Acanceh, the outer band is in slightly higher relief than the inner, further separating the two colors, if present, and relieving the flatness of the frames. In several cartouches some part of the character is covered by the frame, calling attention to its presence and adding interest to the repetitive parade of figures. It is typically Maya to ignore the constraints of a frame.

The use of this inverted T-shape on a monumental scale and as an overlapping framing device seems to be unique in Maya art. The closest equivalent could be the recessed niches that proba-

bly once supported three-dimensional sculpture on the facade of Yaxchilan Structure 33 (Fig. 26). These stepped semiquatrefoils could have served as stylized open mouths of now-missing monster faces tenoned above (Tate n.d.: 363). Outside the Maya area, a resemblance between the Acanceh frames and Zapotec tableros has been noted (von Winning 1985: 17–18). They, too, have double moldings with a protruding exterior frame that serves to create interesting light and shade effects on the surface below. But these tableros do not normally serve as enclosing frames nor are they combined with modeled reliefs, so the resemblance is probably fortuitous.

The inverted T-shaped cartouche recalls the symbols for mountain or cave used throughout Mesoamerica. The Zapotec toponym, for example, is a flattened inverted T, affixed with the locality's name. At Teotihuacan, three overlapping pointed or rounded arcs also may stand for hill or mountain (cf. von Winning 1985: figs. 10–12). Three stepped elements similar to those represented in the Acanceh frieze are combined to form a small mountain symbol on a Maya Tzakol 3 vessel in Teotihuacan style (M. Coe 1982: no. 28), but this symbol is rare in Classic Maya art.

Cave openings or entrances to sacred places can also be T-shaped, beginning at least as early as Olmec times, as demonstrated in the well-known rock carvings of Chalcatzingo. Monument 9 in particular (Grove 1984: fig. 8) resembles the Acanceh cartouches, particularly those of the upper tier which are formed by two T shapes, one inverted on top of the other, which is created by the edges of the lower frames.

The opening is sometimes transformed into the open jaws of an animal or monster, as at Chalcatzingo and in Chenes and Rio Bec doorways. The so-called *ik* (wind, breath, or life in Maya) windows, unique to Palenque, might also be compared with the cave or entrance symbol. These niches and windows are usually positioned so that the T is right-side up. In the subterranean chambers of the Palace, however, the *ik* windows are upside down, symbolic perhaps of the suggested mortuary functions of these rooms (Peterson 1985: 26). The Acanceh cartouches may be similar to the reversed *ik* openings of Palenque, making reference to the underworld or to rituals of death.

The cartouches also echo the cut-away profiles of stepped pyramids—clearly analogous to mountains throughout Mesoamerica—here covering over or containing the animals within.[21] At Teotihuacan, a similar stepped motif—a flat, painted stone or terracotta piece called an *almena*—is believed to have served as a vertical accent on flat roofs (Pasztory, catalogue entry in Berrin 1988: 183).

Based on the available evidence, then, the cartouches may refer to hills or mountains, caves or subterranean places, entrances to sacred enclosures, or cross sections of pyramids.

The Vessels

Between each of the upper cartouches is an object that Seler, basing his identification on central Mexican codices, believed to be a bowl holding a down-ball and a feather (1911: 1017–18) (Fig. 32; Pl. 4). Seler also brought in the very similar design on the wings of the birds below as proof that the bowls were filled with down, although the wing patterns can hardly be seen as naturalistic representations of feathers (cf. Fig. 25, character 16). The squat shape of the bowl, its everted rim, and the X-ray view of the contents recall containers represented in Teotihuacan art (e.g., Séjourné 1959: fig. 120).

Similar vessels appear individually or in front of seated deities in Mixtec codices as well. In the Codex Nuttall (Fig. 27), for example, a liquid-filled container depicted in X-ray view that represents the day-sign water forms the name glyph 2 Water of the seated figure at right. The Codex Fejervary-Mayer (1967: pls. 10, 23) includes representations of numerous X-ray containers, some of which appear to contain a ball of copal, a tied bundle of wood, and sometimes a feather-like projection at the top. The red color that appears on objects within the vessels could conceivably represent blood.

Among the epithets for the divine grandparents

[21] I thank Elizabeth Boone for pointing out the resemblance of the cartouches to pyramids.

Fig. 27 Codex Nuttall, detail of seated figures. Note vessel in x-ray view between them. After Codex Nuttall 1975: 32.

in the *Popol Vuh* (now the patrons of Quiche daykeepers or diviners) is "maker of the blue-green bowl"; by extension this may also refer to those who make and tend shrines, which are today lined with pieces of pottery (Tedlock 1985: 348, 369). Indeed, the bowl may stand for both earth and sky, since the same term *raxa* is used to refer to the green landscape and the blue sky (Tedlock 1985: 58, 348).

The horizontal blue band-and-curl motif within the vessel, previously seen on the wing of the cornice bird, probably represents water. The red, cross-hatched circles at the bottom of the bowl almost certainly stand for blood. In Maya relief sculpture, figures undergoing auto-sacrifice sometimes hold containers filled with papers marked with the same motif. This vessel, then, contains the two most precious liquids, water and blood. The yellow so-called "down-ball" might then be a material for absorbing blood, such as the woven grass balls used by the Mexica. The protruding element at the top of this material, while superficially resembling a feather, is quite unlike any of those shown on the birds represented in the frieze; in fact, as von Winning (1985: 36) points out, it looks more like the tail of character 3, a squirrel (Fig. 28). He believes that the contents of the bowl represent a squirrel pelt The tail-like element is more likely some kind of bloodletting implement such as a sting-ray spine or obsidian blade, although it appears to be of the same material as the vessel's contents, and it is bent rather than straight like most perforators. The line-and-dot marks on both yellow elements are similar to those on T563 and T630, both read logographically as "fire" by most epigraphers, but the absence of curling smoke often associated with both the "fire" glyphs and burning censers depicted in Maya art would indicate that these vessels do not contain fire or burning incense, as suggested by von Winning (1985: 36).

The Characters

Of the twenty-one characters once covering the upper facade of the Palace of the Stuccoes, fourteen were complete and six were at least partially in place at the time of the building's discovery (Fig. 3). The upper register includes birds, a bat, a spider monkey, and the single human figure appearing in the frieze. Early photographs of the frieze, as well as one drawing of it (Fig. 13c), show what may be the remnants of feathers just above character 1, suggesting that there may have been another bird in the upper row (cf. von Winning 1985: fig. 15). Marquina's rendition (Fig. 12a), in fact, adds two complete framed panels at either end of the upper register and two partial ones in the lower, allowing for at least two more characters in the higher zone. Von Winning's (1985: fig. 41) chart of the panels also suggests the existence of two more framed birds at each end of the frieze. Close study of the facade itself, as well as early photographs, however, indicates that there was probably not enough space available for these additional frames.

The animals of the lower tier tend to be terrestrial: there are frogs, snakes, rodents, a feline, and a howler monkey. All the recognizable animal and bird species represented are or were native to the Yucatan peninsula. Most have the anthropomorphic features characteristic of fauna represented in Maya art, including clothing, headdresses, jewelry, and the postures of humans.

Certain differences can be noted between the two rows of characters. The birds tend to be hybrids: all have raptorial claws but varied heads and plumage. Even the bat is partly human, or may represent a human impersonator (Fig. 32, char-

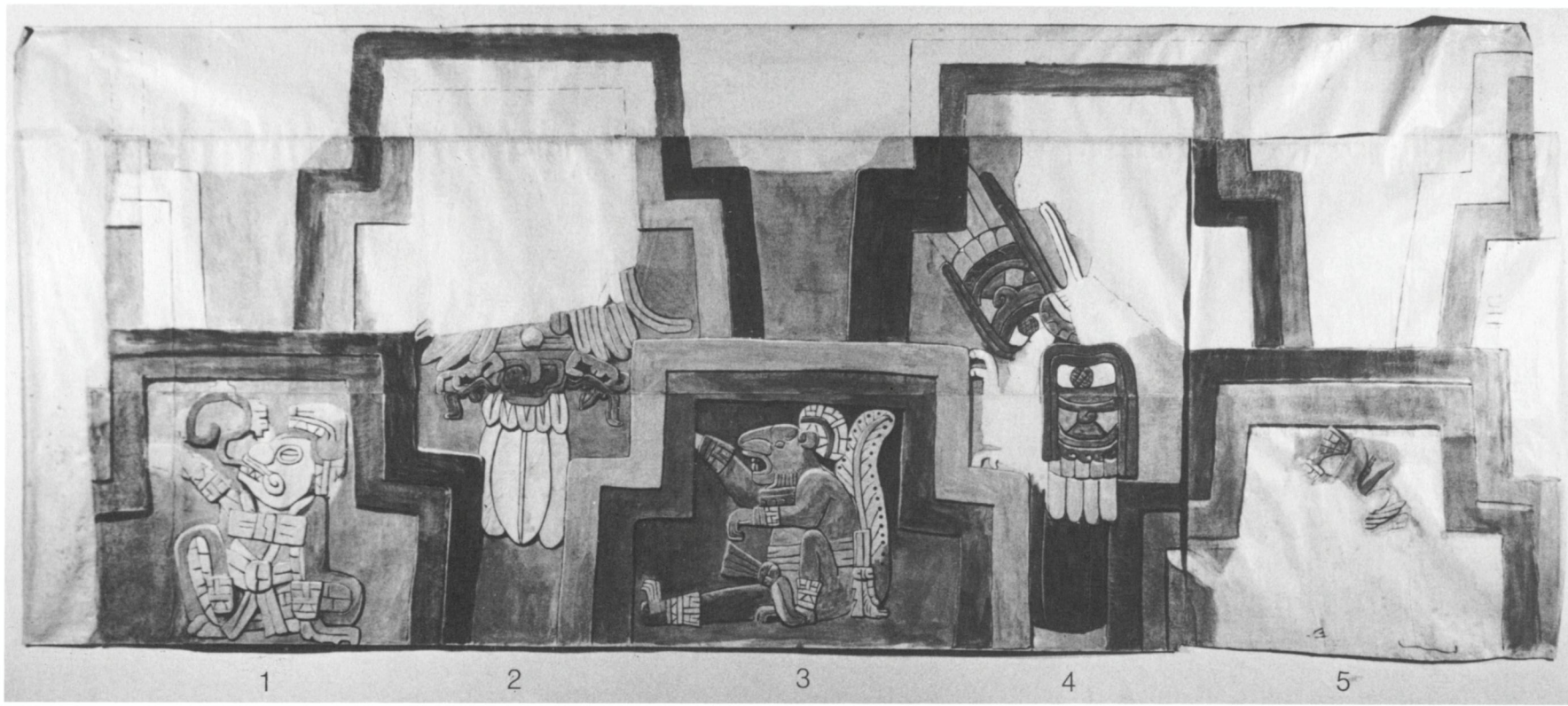


Fig. 28 Characters 1–5: frog or toad, bird, squirrel, bird, unidentified animal. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186b. 280 × 150 cm.

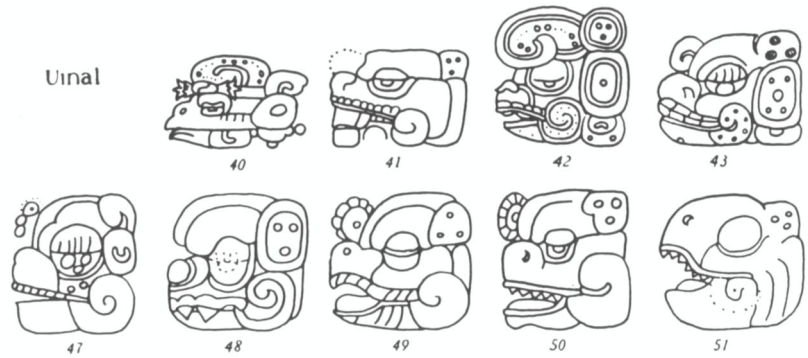


Fig. 29 Examples of the *uinal* glyph. After Thompson 1960: fig. 27.

acter 8). The animals of the lower tier, although anthropomorphized, are single-species rather than polymorphic. They also tend to be more sedentary, restrained in part by the squatter dimensions of their cartouches, while the characters above them are in movement: they move their limbs or wings as if walking or flying, or twist and turn as if trying to escape the bonds of the enclosing niches. Of the lower creatures with paws, most gesture with the right paw toward the eastern end of the frieze, the same direction most of the characters face. The gesture is similar to the so-called "scattering" gesture made by the Maya elite represented in the act of auto-sacrifice, as blood flows from their hands; but it might also be compared with the animated and graceful gestures of conversing figures as in the Bonampak murals and on many painted vessels. What is lacking here, of course, is a sense of discourse between individuals.

Character 1

As Seler recognized, the first character is a frog or toad with reptilian markings on its limbs and webbed feet, visible on the left foot of the animal (Fig. 28; Pl. 3).[22] The curl at the corner of the mouth and the serrated teeth, while not traits of real frogs and toads, are Maya conventions in the representations of these animals.[23] Both features are visible in the head form of the *uinal* (20-day period) glyph (Fig. 29). This animal also wears a knotted loincloth, a headdress, neck pendant, and bracelets and anklets. The eye is ringed, as it is on several other figures on the frieze. From the frog's mouth emerges a curving, tabbed speech scroll, and with its right "hand" the figure gestures as if emphasizing a verbal point.

Both the speech scroll and the ringed eye are acknowledged to be central Mexican motifs, and during the Classic period are strongly associated with Teotihuacan. They do occur in Classic Maya art as well, however. Speech scrolls appear in Oaxaca as early as Monte Alban II (ca. 200 B.C.–A.D. 100), and tabbed speech scrolls like those at Acanceh can be seen on reliefs at Monte Alban dating from Monte Alban IIIa (ca. A.D. 200–450). The significance of the tabs, which are also present on Teotihuacan speech scrolls, is unknown, but presumably they serve adjectival or adverbial functions, modifying the speaker's words.

Eye rings are one of the identifying features of the central Mexican rain deity Tlaloc. They also occur, however, on the faces of other deities, humans, birds, and insects (Klein 1976: 206). The wide distribution of such rings in time and space, as well as the variety of contexts in which they

[22] Von Winning (1985: 19) mistakes characters 1 and 17 for jaguars, apparently basing his identification less on the physical characteristics of the animals than on the presence of what he believes are knotted neckbands, which are sometimes worn by jaguars represented in vase painting.

[23] In a recent analysis of Olmec toad iconography, Furst (1981: 160) suggests that the curls represented on Mesoamerican toad images depict the last of the dead skin that is swallowed by the animal during moulting.

appear, suggests that they do not refer to rain at all. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that the word *Tlaloc* (more correctly, *Tlalloc*) means "he who has the quality of earth" (Sullivan 1974). Zelia Nuttall (1891: 29) proposed long ago that the goggles may refer to special powers of vision, and it has been suggested that the rings are perforated mirrors, giving the wearer such powers (Klein 1976: 213). More recently, David Brown (n.d.: 180), noting the presence of a distinctive pattern of "eyes" on the lower hindwings of the large tropical owl butterfly, has suggested that this is the source of the goggle-eye motif in Teotihuacan art. The same butterfly is also known as the jaguar butterfly because of its unusual nocturnal feeding hours, similar to those of the jaguar.

The frog (character 1), the bat (character 8), the feline (character 13), and the gopher (character 19) are all noted for their nocturnal activities and wear the eye rings. Two of the birds—perhaps nocturnal hunters or sharp-eyed birds who spot their prey from great heights—also have eye rings (characters 10 and 14). Nevertheless, the pairing of animal and eye rings is not always consistent: character 17, also a frog or toad, does not have them, for example.

The eye rings have also been identified as possible symbols of darkness and death (Klein 1976: 207; von Winning 1987, 1: 120), and if the surrounding niches stand for caves or entrances to the underworld, the goggled animals might be seen as dead or supernatural creatures. But again, this explanation does not account for those without the eye rings, nor is it consistent with Maya death imagery.

Teotihuacan-derived motifs like Tlaloc goggles rarely occur in isolation in Maya art, but are almost always present as part of a complex of several Teotihuacan elements that may occur in various combinations. At Acanceh, the eye ring and the speech scroll are only two of the motifs represented that can be linked directly or indirectly with the art of Teotihuacan. These foreign elements—Tlaloc, speech scrolls, short-feather headdresses, year-signs, and other motifs—seem to be connected with Maya sacrifice, but the reasons for this link, as well as the mode of transmission between highland Mexico and the Maya lowlands, remain poorly understood (Schele 1984).

The relationship between anurans and rainfall is well documented in Maya myth and ethnographical accounts. Frogs, for example, are thought to announce rain with their croaking (Thompson 1970: 258). What is less well-known about frogs and toads is their ritual use in Pre-Hispanic times. It remains difficult to prove that *bufo marinus* was used psychotropically, as several scholars have suggested (e.g., Dobkin de Rios 1974), but the large number of frog and toad bones deposited in burials at Cozumel, as well as a few elsewhere, cannot be overlooked (Hamblin 1984: 50–51). Clearly, anurans had a ritual significance that transcended their role as harbingers of rain.

Character 2

Of the first character in the upper register, only the tail feathers, claws, and tips of the wing feathers survived after the frieze was uncovered (Fig. 28; Pl. 3). Held in the unidentified bird's raptorial claws, however, are trilobal motifs whose red color leaves little doubt that they stand for dripping blood. Other contexts in which the motif occurs, both in the Acanceh frieze and elsewhere in Mesoamerican art, confirm this identification.

The trilobal motif has long been recognized as a symbol for liquid, with color and context determining whether water or blood is represented (von Winning 1947; Séjourné 1959: 124, fig. 125).[24] Although it occurs throughout Mesoamerica from the Late Pre-Classic through the Early Post-Classic, it is most strongly associated with the art of Teotihuacan and Tula, where it is represented dripping from human hearts. Toltec art, for example, often features an eagle clutching a bleeding heart or drops of blood in its claws, a theme largely limited to the Post-Classic (Heyden 1987: fig. 17; Diehl 1983: pl. 15).[25] At Cacaxtla,

[24] A good discussion of this triple-drop motif, with illustrations, can be found in Heyden (1987: 121 ff).

[25] According to a contemporary Tzeltal story, the harpy eagle collects gold from the foot of a cross at the bottom of the sea. Its color is perceived as red rather than gold (Stross 1985: 77). Perhaps for the Tzeltal, the most precious Pre-Conquest liquid, blood, was replaced metaphorically by the European one, gold.

Fig. 30 Maya vase with cormorants and treble scroll motif, detail. After Kerr 1989: file no. 1698.

however, a site whose murals display strong Maya influence, a blue bird, possibly a quetzal, holds a red trilobe in its beak (Foncerrada de Molina 1982: fig. 12). A Teotihuacan bird from a mural at Tetitla also holds a more elaborate version of the motif in its beak (Pasztory, catalogue entry in Berrin 1988: fig. VI.IIb).

Between the body and tail feathers of character 2 appears another Mesoamerican symbol for liquid, the so-called "treble scroll" (Neys and von Winning 1946). Although like the trilobed motif it was first identified in central Mexico, it appears to have been a more widespread symbol, occurring in Classic Maya art in contexts without Teotihuacan associations. What the design actually represents is not clear, although a cross-section of a shell has been suggested (Thompson 1960: 278). In Maya art, at least, it indicates watery realms and their inhabitants, whether animal or supernatural (Fig. 30). Treble scrolls mark the water's surface on the well-known canoe-scene bones from Tikal and the body of a fish caught in a waterbird's beak on a cylinder vessel from the same site (Coggins 1975: figs. 88, 112–115). Closer to Acanceh, the motif is shown attached to intertwined streams on the facade of Dzibilchaltun's Str. 1-sub, which features aquatic motifs (Fig. 15).

While the placement of the treble scroll on a bird's body may be unique in Maya iconography, it does occur in the same position on raptorial birds represented in mural fragments from Teotihuacan (Fig. 31 and A. Miller 1973: figs. 361, 363; Berrin 1988: pls. 17, 18, 20).[26] As at Acanceh, the center portion of the motif is red and the border blue, perhaps in reference to the two most sacred liquids, water and blood. At Teotihuacan, in fact, drops may be shown falling from this motif (von Winning 1987, 2, chap. 1: fig. 5). Above the treble scroll on the Acanceh bird is a knotted bow whose significance will be discussed in relationship to character 10.

Finally, at Xochicalco, a site which, like Cacaxtla, shows evidence of Maya influence in its art, blue treble scrolls adorn the body of the undulating serpents on the talud of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent (Fig. 18), as well as on the superior molding of the tablero above on the western facade of the building (not shown here).[27] Here, perhaps, the symbol may stand for rain-bringing clouds, transforming Quetzalcoatl into Mixcoatl, the Cloud Serpent.[28] The Acanceh birds, then, may also be marked as messengers of rain clouds.

Character 3

This may be a squirrel, given its rodent-like

[26] Brown (n.d.: 153 ff) believes this bird, often identified as a quetzal, is a great curassow, admitting, however, that the green plumage depicted does not conform to that of the curassow. Pasztory (catalogue entry in Berrin 1988: 165) sees green birds represented at Teotihuacan as mythical creatures combining the attributes of more than one species.

[27] Adela Breton's watercolor of the eastern wall of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent is reproduced in Giles and Stewart 1989: pl. 40.

[28] In a recent dissertation on Xochicalco (V. Smith n.d.: 390–391), the author sees the serpent as a version of the *Cipactli* monster, embodying water, blood, fertility, and the earth, as well as serving as the site's tutelary deity.

Fig. 31 Teotihuacan mural fragment of unknown provenience: bird. Note treble scroll at tail. After Miller 1973: fig. 363.

features and bushy tail (Fig. 28; Pl. 3). With the possible exception of a panel from the Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza (Roys 1933: pl. 1b), however, squirrels are not represented in Maya monumental art. The animals themselves are, or at least were, quite common not far from Acanceh at Chichen Itza (Allen and Chapman 1897: 7).

If unimportant iconographically, the squirrel is by no means absent from Maya texts. A possible squirrel-head hieroglyph, read *cuc,* has been identified and appears as the main sign in the name of the important Naranjo ruler Smoking Squirrel (Kelley 1962: 282–283). According to the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Roys 1933: 69, footnote 5), one of the greatest Maya men was called *Ah Mex Cuc,* or whiskered squirrel. *Ku'uk* (Yucatec) also refers to the *katun* cycle, or period of 20 *tuns* or years (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 346; von Winning 1985: 20). Thomas Barthel (cited in von Winning 1985: 20, 36) interprets the squirrel as symbolizing the revolution of *katun* cycles (20-year periods in the Maya calendar), referring here to an important *katun* ending at Acanceh. No similar use of this motif is known in Maya art, however.

This squirrel, like the frog, sits up like a human and gestures with both forepaws. Its small headdress is worn behind the ear, and the segmented pattern is repeated in its bracelets and anklets. Just below the character's short beard is a blue bar pendant marked with the curl motif that probably indicates water.

Character 4

This is another bird, of which only the wings, tail feathers, and parts of the beak and claws remained when Breton copied the frieze (Fig. 28; Pl. 3). The bird appears to have been perched on the outer edge of character 3's frame, head tilted back and one wing stretched up, the other down. The bird's elongated, blunt beak is visible just above another waterband collar.[29] The elaborate design of the wings is very similar to that of the large corner bird (Fig. 25) and is repeated, with variations, on the wings of the remaining birds. Below, and covered by this design, are the more naturalistic tail feathers of the bird.

Character 5

This animal was in fragmentary condition when uncovered, and no existing photograph or drawing helps to identify it (Fig. 28; Pl. 3). In Breton's watercolor the remaining portions look like a tail or feather (lower left) and the open jaws of an animal with protruding tongue(?), upper teeth, furry beard, and jeweled noseplug. If this interpre-

[29] This small detail would indicate that the bird is probably not an eagle, as suggested by von Winning (1985: 29).

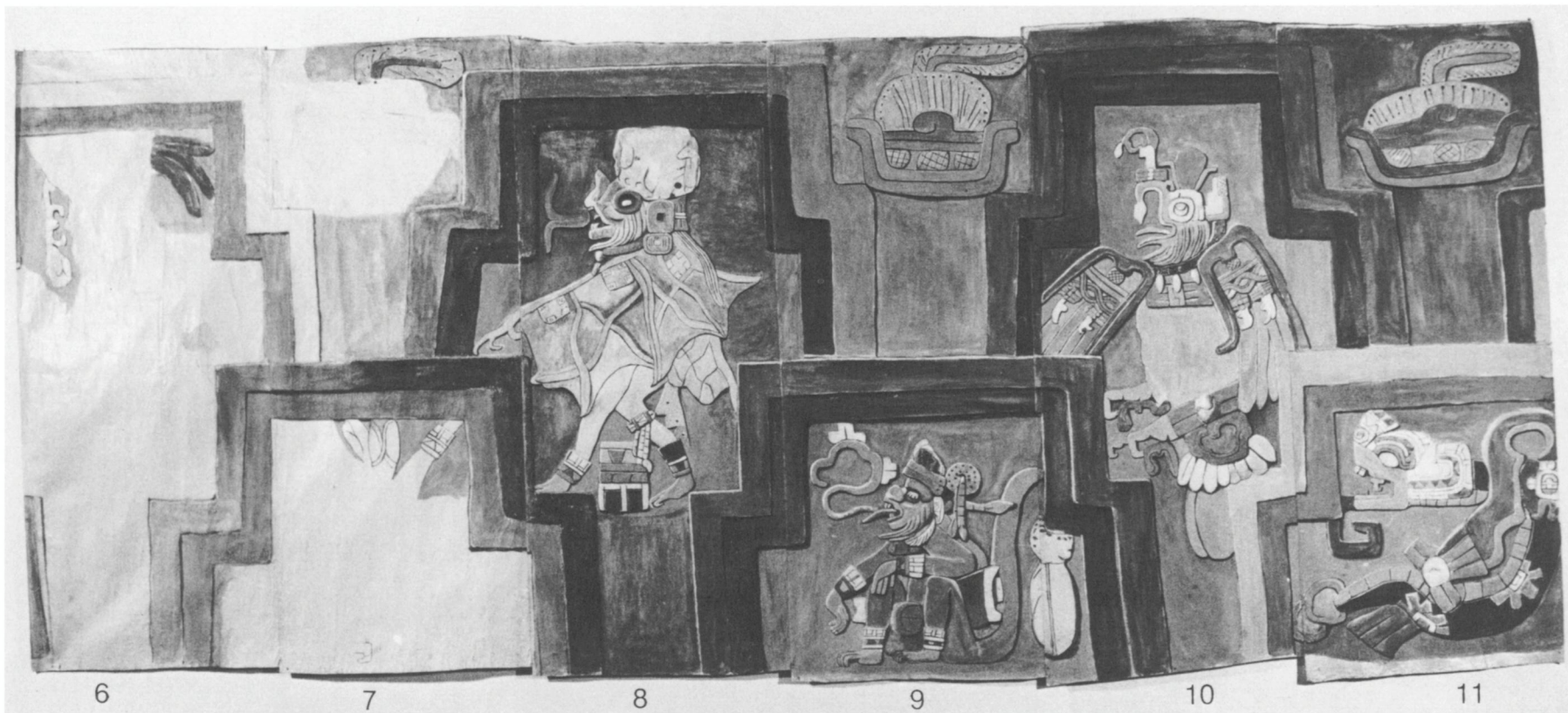


Fig. 32 Characters 6–11: bird, unidentified animal, bat, howler monkey, bird, snake. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186a. 276 × 119 cm.

tation is correct, however, the creature would have been facing west, unlike the other remaining characters who face east.[30]

Character 6

This character is completely absent from Seler's drawing, but Breton's shows the remains of green feathers at the upper right and a claw-like dangling element at the upper left (Fig. 32; Pl. 4).

Character 7

This character is more complete in Seler's drawing than in Breton's (Fig. 32; Pl. 4). Its arms are extended upwards as if supporting the enclosing cartouche: the pose recalls that of the Bacabs, the Maya directional gods placed at the four corners of the earth to hold up the sky. Its feet resemble the webbed feet of characters 1 and 17. The creature's head appears to face east, as indicated by the prominent eye and part of a nose or beak. Three vertical elements, feathers perhaps, are framed by the figure's upraised arms.

Character 8

The animal represented here is clearly an anthropomorphic leaf-nosed bat (Fig. 32; Pl. 4), a creature often depicted on polychrome vases from the Chama region and strongly associated with the Maya underworld (Fig. 33). The Chama bats, however, are usually represented with the body in a frontal position with outstretched wings, often covered with signs for death. This bat is in profile, with the back leg bent as if walking, and the wing membranes relatively naturalistic, terminating in slender fingers.[31] At the upper edges of the wings are signs that may be *kan* crosses. Although *kan* means "yellow" in Maya, the *kan* symbol has been given multiple associations that range from blue, water, turquoise, precious (Thompson 1960: 275–276), to red, fire, the sun (Stross 1985), and blood (Stuart 1988: 182). The red, bifurcating scroll emerging from the bat's mouth is a consistent attribute of Maya bats. While it has been described as a speech scroll, flame, or smoke, it more likely depicts flowing blood. Bats represented on Maya pots often have other attributes of death, such as disembodied eyes, and the "snatch-bats" of Xibalba, their snouts like knives, decapitated one of the Hero Twins, Hunahpuh, during the brothers' trials in the underworld (Tedlock 1985: 143). Bats are associated with human sacrifice, particularly decapitation, throughout Mesoamerica, in fact (Thompson 1966: 180). The aquatic functions attributed to the bat by von Winning (1985: 30) are not supported by either Maya iconographic or ethnographic sources.

Fig. 33 Chama area, Guatemala, vase, detail of bat. After M. Coe 1973: no. 12.

The ringed eyes and short beard are attributes shared with several of the other animals. The bat wears a two-piece blue earplug, a blue necklace with a white pendant, and an unusual puffy turban, formed by placing stone flakes in wet stucco. Turbans occur occasionally in Maya art, sometimes on rulers depicted on stelae but more often on attendants represented on vases or on figurines (e.g., Schele and Miller 1986: fig. v.4, pl. 31). It

[30] The one remaining exception is character 14 (Fig. 32), whose head is turned to the west but whose body and feet face east.

[31] A recently published, unprovenienced Maya vase, however, includes a chubby anthropomorphic leaf-nosed bat with a disembodied eye standing in profile, among other half-human, half-animal participants (Kerr 1989: file no. 1440). Bats are also depicted on other pots in this volume (file nos. 1490 and 1901).

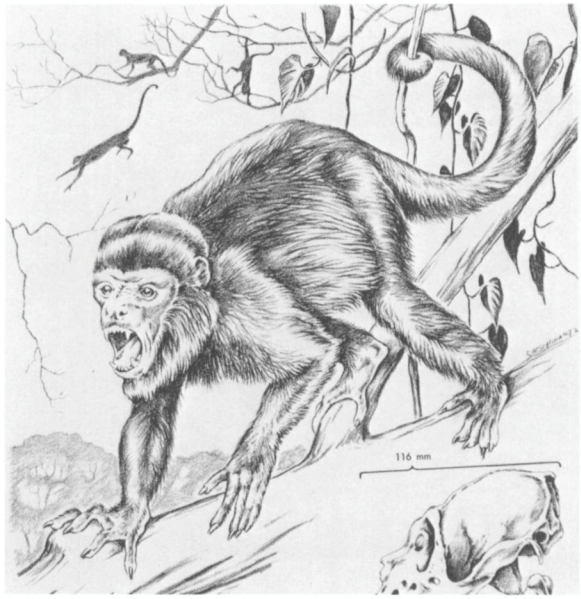


Fig. 34 Howler monkey (*Alouatta palliata*). After Leopold 1959: fig. 123.

has been suggested that the material forming the headdresses of this character and the gopher (Fig. 42, character 19) might represent earth, a reference to their cave and earth habitats (Dr. Alfred Gardner, personal communication, 1982).[32] From beneath the turban falls a long strand of hair bound in red. Between the character's legs is a rectangular form, but an examination of both early photographs and the original figure does not clarify whether this is a separate element or the end of the animal's loincloth apron. The jagged red element behind the rear leg, however, may be the apron. Although the legs are clearly human, the feet, slightly darker in color than the flesh-toned legs, are those of a bat. The character, then, may well be a human impersonator in bat costume.

Character 9

The species of this animal has never been certain. Seler did not attempt to identify it, and others have called it a jaguar (M. Coe 1987: 84; Morley and Brainerd 1983: figs. 13–22) (Fig. 32; Pl. 4).[33] However, the snout, sharp teeth, silky beard, long tail, and prehensile paws are all traits of the howler monkey (Fig. 34).[34] It is interesting to note that the unnatural blue color of the animal is shared with only one other character, the single human (Fig. 40, character 12). The color may have signified a relationship between man and monkeys, an affinity recognized by the Maya themselves (M. Coe 1977: 346; Hunn 1977: 203). Robertson (1983: 18) has established that at Palenque, at least, blue connotes divine or precious things and the attributes of rulers. If the Maya of Acanceh shared the same color symbolism, this howler monkey may have had special status.

Character 9's unusual headdress looks like a reddened bone to which a blue disk with serpentine appendages has been attached. A small cross-hatched red crown outlined in blue covers short, cropped hair or feathers. At the neck is a white element: a cloth or rope necklace, or possibly an ear pendant. Around the rather plump (and possibly hunchbacked) body of the monkey is wrapped a knotted, red loincloth. Just below (and possibly attached to) the tail is an object that looks like a large feather. It is surmounted by the same roughened stucco material used in the bat's headdress.

The elaborate speech scroll that emerges from the open mouth may refer to the howler monkey's loud voice, which has been compared to that of the jaguar (Gaumer 1917: 311). Nevertheless, the presence of a speech scroll is not a clear indicator of the loudness of the animal's voice: the feline represented by character 15 lacks one, for example.

Character 10

One of the best-preserved of the birds represented in the upper register, character 10's species is not clear (Fig. 32; Pl. 4). Like the other birds, it has raptorial claws clutching drops of blood, the knotted treble scroll at the tail, and decorative

[32] A polychrome vessel in the November collection (Robicsek and Hales 1982: no. 19) depicts a bat with a *caban* (earth) sign suspended over its head, as if to suggest the underworld locale of the scene.

[33] Von Winning (1985: 20–22) believes that God N is represented. He reads the creature's tongue as a cigar, his headdress as a net, his features for those of an aged man, and his knotted loincloth as a pectoral.

[34] When shown this figure, Dr. Richard Thorington of the Smithsonian Institution, a specialist in monkeys, immediately confirmed my own hypothesis.

wings. The head of the bird, which would presumably provide the best evidence for its identity, is also very stylized and heavily ornamented. The sharply downcurved beak suggests a bird of prey such as a hawk or eagle, but a macaw, a parrot, and a curassow are also possibilities.[35] The ornaments of the head and beak are unique, although the stacked bars immediately above the beak look like the knotted motifs shown on the bird's wings. Curved around the bird's head and terminating in a stepped motif is another waterband necklace, from which shells or drops are suspended over a knotted, red pendant.

Knotted pendants, particularly red ones, may be attributes of bloodletting. Prisoners and those undergoing auto-sacrifice often wear neck or arm bands made of knotted cloth, which presumably became blood-soaked during extended bloodletting rites (cf. Benson 1976; Schele 1984). In any case, knots are included among the elements comprising the Teotihuacan-derived costumes worn by figures participating in sacrificial acts on monumental sculpture (cf. Schele 1984: fig. 18).

The design on character 10's wings differs slightly from that of the other birds. Instead of the curl and waterband motif below the cross-hatched circle, intertwined blue bands appear to which red knots are attached, each terminating in a claw-like white pendant.

Character 11

The rattlesnake, mouth open, tongue protruding, and body arched is poised in mid-air as if about to strike (Fig. 32; Pl. 4; Fig. 35). The rigid position of the serpent's body and its unnaturally angular tongue recall central Mexican rather than Maya images (Fig. 36), and the bands of small red and yellow triangles on both the headdress and "collar" resemble Teotihuacan mosaic costume elements (Fig. 22).[36]

[35] Von Winning (1985: 31) sees this bird as a bat, citing Thompson but giving no specific source, and comparing it with images from the Borgia Group codices, which to my mind do not help sustain his argument.

[36] See von Winning 1987, 1: chap. 1, figs. 1–3, for other examples of Teotihuacan serpents. He (1985: 23) points out that indicating the nose by a scroll is typical of serpents depicted on Teotihuacan plano relief ware vessels.

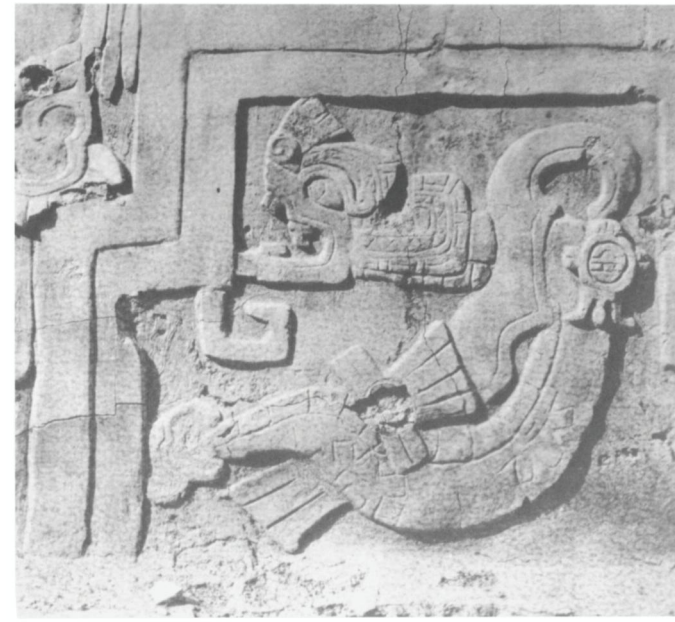


Fig. 35 Character 11: snake. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Fig. 36 Teotihuacan, mural from Zone 5-A, Room 1, coiled serpent. After A. Miller 1973: fig. 102.

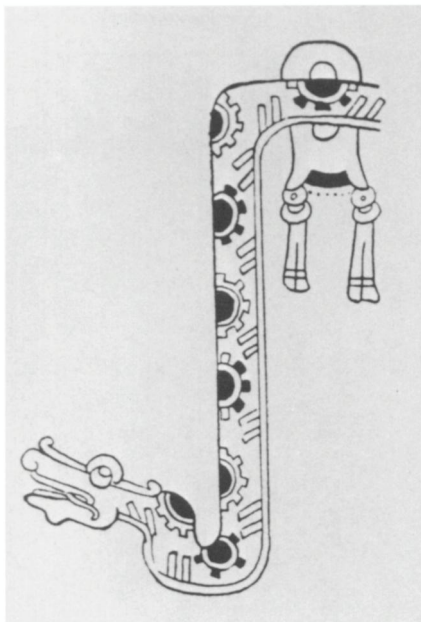


Fig. 37 Codex Madrid, p. 7B, serpent. After Thompson 1960: 13.15.

The snake's body was painted green, with yellow used for the mouth, scales, and the stylized rattles which are outlined in blue. As von Winning (1985: 23) points out, the body is twisted so that the ventral scales appear on top. The body is decorated with the "half-star" motif that is often found along the borders of Teotihuacan murals. It can also be seen at Cacaxtla, on the square hieroglyph to the left of the bird-man character on the south wall of Building A, and on the cloak of the principal character on the west side of Building B's battle scene (Fig. 19 and D. McVicker 1985: fig. 5).

The derivation and meaning of the half-star have never been satisfactorily explained, although Baird's (1989) recent paper on the subject is an important step in understanding the motif. The "half-star" designation may derive from highland examples of stars, notably in Mixtec painting (cf.

Fig. 38 Teotihuacan, Zone 5-A, Portico 19, Mural 1: detail of figure spearing heart. After A. Miller 1973: fig. 132.

Spinden 1913: fig. 239), but some have referred to it as a star-fish or a conch shell section (Kubler 1967: 6). A final possibility is that it represents half of the Maya completion sign, which in turn, Coggins argues (1980: 728, 736), may derive from Teotihuacan quadripartition. Whatever it represents, it does seem to originate in Teotihuacan art and occur occasionally in Teotihuacan-influenced Maya art, particularly of the Early Classic (Baird 1989: 108–112).

Although serpents abound in Maya art, there are none with the same markings of the Acanceh snake. The closest equivalent, on Codex Madrid 30, has semicircular disks with radiating knobs along its body (Fig. 37). Thompson (1960: 75), however, suggests that these are variants of the cross-hatched infix that forms part of the *Chicchan* hieroglyph and represents snake markings. The motifs of the Acanceh snake more closely resemble the half-star.

Passing in front of and behind the snake's body is an odd curved element from whose tip dangles a glyph-like motif with the familiar red trident attached. This object, almost certainly an eccentric flint or knife, resembles the curved obsidian knives with paper-wrapped handles that are often carried by animal and human figures at Teotihuacan (Fig. 38 and Berrin 1988: pl. 37).

The glyph-like element is a stylized human heart, a motif that seems to have originated at Teotihuacan and is particularly common in central Mexico. It occurs in hieroglyphic form at Xochicalco, while at Cacaxtla it is prominent in the battle scene of Building B, as an isolated hieroglyph, as a costume ornament for the victorious warriors, and even in the gaping chest of a fallen victim (Foncerrada de Molina 1982: figs. 17–28). Foncerrada de Molina (1982), noting the association of this glyph with Tlaloc at Cacaxtla, points out that it underlines the bellicose aspect of that deity even at Teotihuacan, where there is less overt sacrificial imagery than in the art of some later cultures. Others (Langley 1982; Millon, catalogue entry in Berrin 1988: 217) have also recently commented on the prevalence of bloodletting iconography at Teotihuacan, where it has often been overlooked. Indeed, a recently published mural fragment, depicting two coyotes tearing out a deer's heart, has been interpreted as a metaphorical representation of human heart sacrifice (C. Millon 1988: fig. v.11).[37]

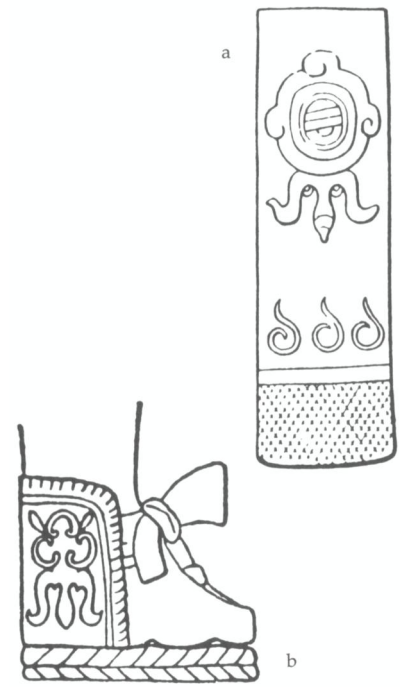


Fig. 39 Copan, Stela 6: (a) loincloth; (b) sandal. After Proskouriakoff 1950: figs. 261, 30w.

In the Maya area, the bleeding heart motif forms part of the complex of Teotihuacan-derived imagery associated with bloodletting. It can be seen, for example, on the turban headdresses of the principal figure on Stela 9 of Piedras Negras (Proskouriakoff 1950: fig. 18p), which features Teotihuacan costume elements and a captive. The ruler portrait on Stela 6 at Copan, dated 9.12.10.0.0. (A.D. 682), around the same time as the proposed date of the Palace of the Stuccoes, is notable for several Teotihuacan features such as Tlaloc faces and year-signs in his headdress (Baudez 1986: fig. 4). On his loincloth the bleeding heart appears, with drops below it, and on his anklets is a dripping treble scroll (Fig. 39a, b).

[37] David Brown (n.d.: 119) believes the two predators are pumas rather than coyotes.

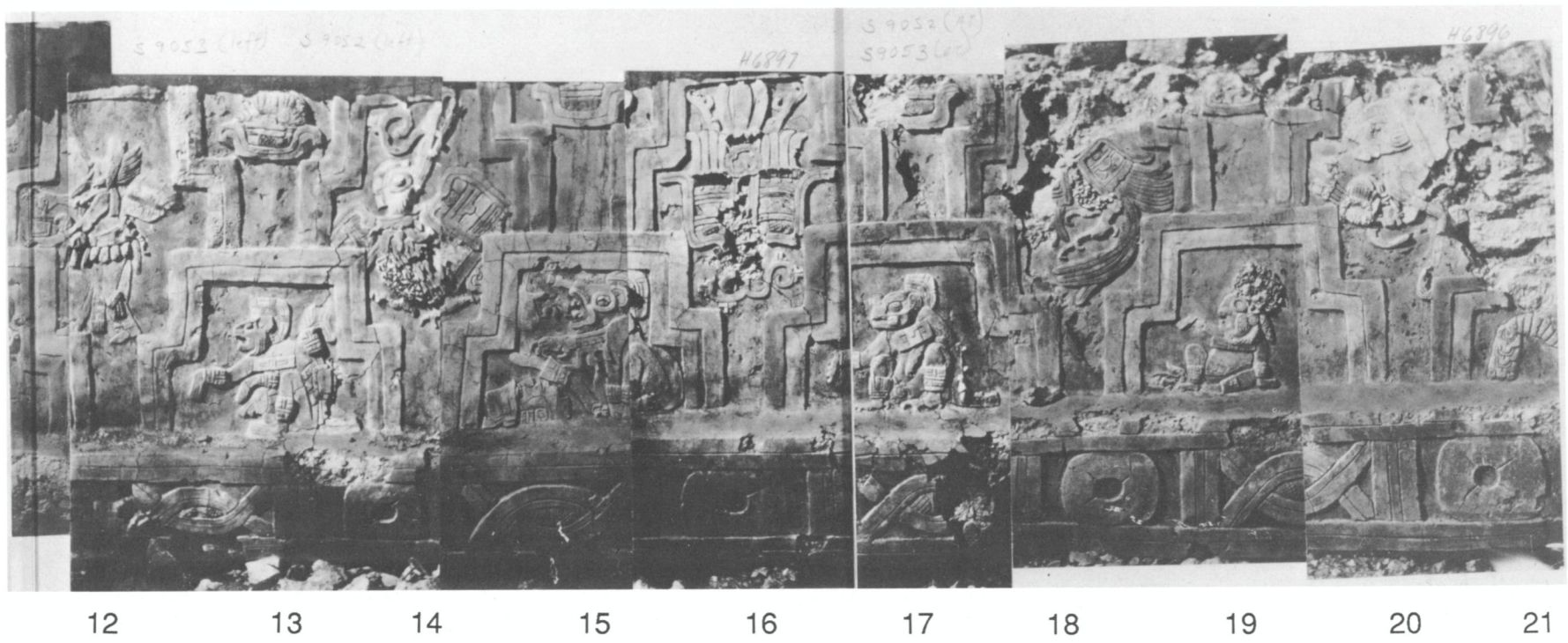


Fig. 40 Characters 12–21: human, rodent, bird, feline, bird, and others. Hand-colored photograph, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Significantly, a bloodletting event is recorded on this stela (Schele 1982: 273, 277).

The bleeding heart, then, seems to be particularly important at highland sites that feature eclectic art styles, such as Cacaxtla and Xochicalco, and, in the Maya area, on monumental sculpture with Teotihuacan motifs and references to bloodletting.

Character 12

From this character through character 17, a section of the hand-colored photograph of the frieze will be substituted for Breton's missing watercolor (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Although, as the sole human figure in the entire frieze, character 12 seems out of place, his presence is important for providing stylistic clues to the dating of the facade. In her major study of Maya monumental sculpture, Proskouriakoff (1950) created a chronological framework for stylistic change in the representation of the human figure that provides an independent check on monuments with Initial Series inscriptions and can suggest a time frame for undated sculpture. Unlike the coherent development of southern lowland sculpture, however, that of the north is more difficult to trace and seems to represent heterogeneous schools affected by sporadic foreign incursions or influences (Proskouriakoff 1951). Nevertheless, some of the points made by Proskouriakoff about the Classic Maya tradition in the south can be applied to northern relief sculpture as well.[38]

The figure's pose, for example, can probably be dated to no earlier than 9.8.0.0.0 (A.D. 593), or the beginning of the Late Classic Period. He stands in profile, legs apart but overlapping just above the knees, and with the near leg bent in a walking pose. The swaying kneeband, the outstretched arms, and the head tossed back, hair flying, reinforce the sense of movement.

There is some anatomical distortion, as indicated by the rather elongated left arm and the smaller right leg and foot, and the eye is shown frontally rather than in profile. These traits, as well as the simplified anatomical contours and relatively unelaborate costume, are typical features of northern Maya sculpture (Proskouriakoff 1950: 156).

The entire figure is painted a brilliant blue and has a shock of red hair (or possibly feathers) bound with a simple blue headband with reptilian markings. At Palenque, the color blue connotes divine or precious things, while mortals are always shown with red bodies and hair (Robertson 1983: 17–18). Red hair (perhaps dyed or painted) is also represented in the murals of both Bonampak and Cacaxtla.

Seler, taking a central Mexican perspective, believed the character to represent Xochipilli, "god of the young maize, lord of dance and song" (1911: 1023). To support his attribution, he described the object in the character's mouth to be an ear of maize. Few alternatives to maize come to mind, except perhaps a thick cigar. Nevertheless, it is unlike other representations of cigars, which usually emanate smoke and are held by the smoker. The blowgun used by the Hero Twin Hunahpu is also usually much longer (but cf. the short blowgun illustrated in M. Coe 1989: fig. 14), and is normally held in the hunter's hands as well. The only other features the Acanceh character shares with this figure (often represented in Maya vase painting) are his youth and his headband.

Although Breton's unpublished black and white drawing of this character indicates that his eye is human, an early photograph (Fig. 17) shows what may be the square pupil of a supernatural. Furthermore, running from the corner of the eye to the headband is a jagged line, either a crack or a deity face-marking (the stucco above this line has fallen off the facade). Von Winning (1985: 32) sees this as a dotted line identifying the figure as God E or the young maize god of the codices, although the figure bears no other attributes of this deity (cf. Taube 1985).

A red cloth or rope ornament passes through the figure's ear, and a narrow piece of similar material appears to be tied around his neck. Both of these are attributes of persons engaged in sacrifice (cf. Schele 1984: fig. 12). Character 12, then,

[38] Justeson (n.d.), in an attempt to establish a date for the frieze, made a style graph of the type used by Proskouriakoff (1950) for traits in Maya relief sculpture. His graph indicates a date of about 9.16.10.0.0 (A.D. 761) for the relief.

might be a victim or participant in bloodletting activities.

He holds a small, simple "incense bag" in his right hand, while around his left wrist (or possibly behind it, attached to the belt) are two large balls.[39] From the tied belt hang shells, a motif typical of, although not limited to, Late Classic costume. The tendency for the belt to curve around the waist, thus giving the body volume, is also typically Late Classic (Proskouriakoff 1950: 65). The costume is completed by a rather long, decorated loincloth apron at front and back, a single garter, simple tied sandals, and a large back ornament. The latter, decorated with a stepped fret motif and topped with short, red feathers, recalls the more elaborate backracks of figures depicted in both monumental sculpture and polychrome ceramics in the southern Maya lowlands.

Even allowing for the aberrant and non-Classic features of Yucatec sculpture, this figure can almost certainly be dated to the Late, rather than the Early, Classic Period. The figure's proportions, pose, and costume also indicate a date well before the possibility of Toltec influence, and compared to some of the other characters represented on the frieze, even Teotihuacan elements do not occur. In the absence of extant stucco reliefs depicting humans in the northern lowlands, the closest comparison (geographically and stylistically) might be with the interior and exterior stucco reliefs at the Late Classic Maya site of Comalcalco, in the Gulf Coast area of Tabasco (Fig. 41 and G. Andrews 1975: figs. 117–118). The resemblance of the site's famous tomb sculptures to certain western Yucatec sculpture has already been noted (Proskouriakoff 1950: 149), and the discovery of other figures in recent years reinforces the comparison. Like the Acanceh figure, they are characterized by simplified anatomy with some distortion, fleshy faces, rather awkward postures, and relatively unadorned costumes.[40]

[39] Not a bird, as von Winning (1985: 32) suggests.

[40] Observations by the author, 1975 and 1982. As far as I know, the only published illustrations of these reliefs are in Blom and LaFarge 1926–27, G. Andrews et al. 1967, and G. Andrews 1975, and do not include the entire corpus.

Character 13

This is a yellow rodent whose bushy tail, wrapped in a jeweled band, curls up behind it (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Although it bears some resemblance to character 3, there are enough differences to make its identification as another squirrel uncertain (cf. von Winning 1985: 24). Its headdress, like those represented on several other characters, is depicted frontally rather than in a foreshortened profile view, a device commonly used in Mesoamerican art when clarity is required over visual accuracy. The segmented design of the headdress and jewelry again recalls Teotihuacan costume (cf. Figs. 22, 38).

Character 14

Although partially destroyed, character 14 is still the best preserved of the birds represented, and is therefore the one with the most clearly recognizable features (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Despite the short legs and neck, large raptorial claws, and stylized wings, the long, curving beak identifies the bird as the mythological Maya waterbird (cf. Fig. 30). This hybrid has variously been described as a crane, heron, pelican, cormorant, or some combination of these birds (Coggins 1975: 298–299). The bird shown here, while most closely resembling a cormorant, is clearly not intended to represent a single species accurately.[41]

The bird's breast feathers, once bright green, were created using the local technique of placing limestone flakes in wet stucco. The relative naturalism of the ruffled breast feathers contrasts sharply with the flat, decorative wings painted in red and blue.[42] In an unusual departure from the restrictions of the frame, the bird's tail passes under the frame of the next cartouche to reemerge just in front of character 15's face. Although not all characters are wholly contained within their

[41] Although von Winning (1985: 33) presents evidence to suggest that a king vulture is represented, the beak seems too long for a vulture.

[42] A polychrome plate of unknown provenience features a waterbird whose wing pattern is very similar to those depicted on the Acanceh birds (Bolz 1975: pl. LXII). The rest of the bird, which holds a large fish in its beak, is represented naturalistically.

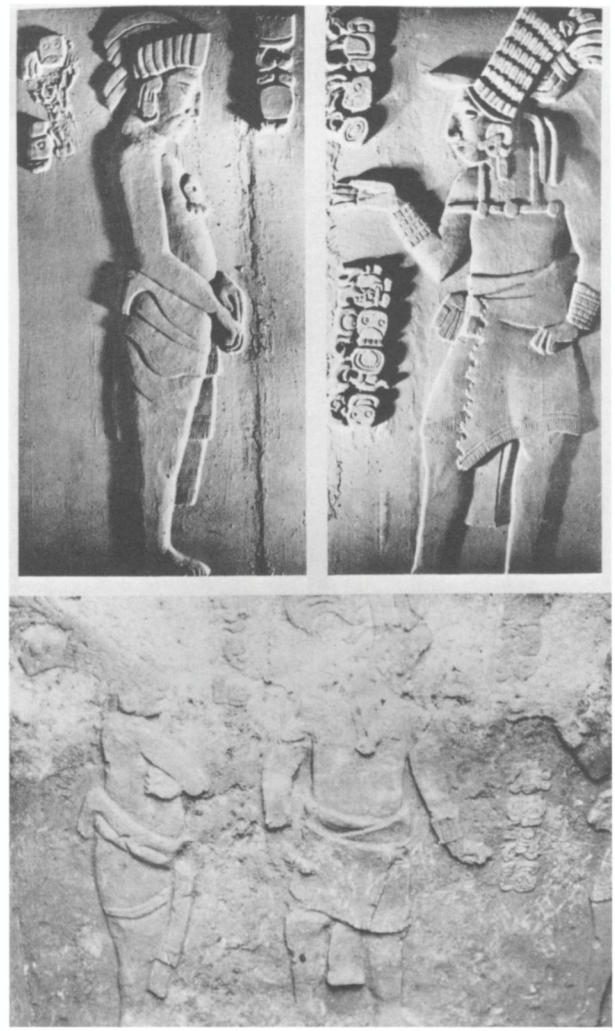


Fig. 41 Comalcalco, stucco figures from tomb: (top) figures restored; (bottom) wall as originally found. After Morley and Brainerd 1983: fig. 13.21.

frames (cf. characters 3, 10), this is the only one continuing beyond it.

The bird wears the waterband necklace from which three red elements are suspended, as well as the familiar segmented headdress. Its head is painted yellow, the lidded eye red, and the eye ring blue. Two bead-like pellets mark the points where the long beak joins the face and where it opens, and a third pellet is held at the tip of the beak.[43] A speech scroll, blue with red tabs, emerges from the open beak and curls up behind it, gracefully filling the space above the bird's head.

Waterbirds occur in monumental sculpture, polychrome ceramics, and other media throughout the Maya lowlands.[44] Despite its frequent appearance, the waterbird's significance for the Classic Maya is not well understood. At Tikal, for example, where waterbirds are represented in

[43] In his *General History of the Things of New Spain,* Book 11, Sahagún (1963: 30) states that the pelican was hunted for a precious green stone or feather found in its gizzard that was a sign that the hunter would henceforth prosper. Perhaps the Maya shared this belief, in which case the object held in the beak here might be the coveted stone.

[44] Cf. the lintel of Str. 5D-52 at Tikal (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982: fig. 75) and a carved Chochola vessel (M. Coe 1973: no. 63).

both sculpture and ceramics, it has been suggested that they may have served as symbols of dynastic origins or ties with riverine areas to the north and east of the site, or even as domestic pets (Coggins 1975: 300, 302). Their rarity in monumental art elsewhere, however, would seem to indicate a broader meaning. Michael Coe (1973: 123), for example, sees waterbirds represented on funerary ceramics as denizens of the watery Maya underworld. A painted vase depicting a row of cormorants standing above a series of trilobed motifs like those appearing on some of the Acanceh birds' tails underscores their association with water, at least (Fig. 30).

Character 15

The snarling mouth and large teeth, sharp claws, feline ear, and long tail clearly identify this animal as a feline, probably a jaguar or puma (Seler 1911: 1021) (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Since in the colored photograph it is yellow without spots or other markings, it is most likely the latter animal. In contrast to the more restricted range of the jaguar, the slightly smaller puma once ranged throughout Mexico, existing almost entirely on a diet of deer, once abundant in Yucatan (Leopold 1959: 476). While of the felines present in the Maya area, the jaguar is the largest and most feared by man, both cats have reputations as man-eaters (Gaumer 1917: 172, 183).[45] The puma is said to have such a strong preference for blood that it often kills a number of animals for the blood alone, leaving the meat untouched (Gaumer 1917: 184). Appropriately, then, the predatory nature of the cat is indicated here by the blood symbols at the neck and before the gaping jaws, and by the severed human head, neck painted red, that lies at its feet.

The tied headband recalls the cloth wristlets, ear ornaments, and neckpieces often seen on sacrificial victims depicted in Maya art. But recently severed heads, although appearing with some frequency in vase painting, are rarely depicted in monumental art and never outside the context of human sacrifice or warfare. This juxtaposition of an aggressive, man-eating feline and its prey is therefore quite unusual, and emphasizes the otherwise understated references to bloodletting and death elsewhere in the frieze.

Character 16

The bird is in a descending position, body neatly and symmetrically contained within its cartouche (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Although its head is destroyed, the remains of a crest of short feathers and a hooked beak can still be seen. An elaborate, bifurcated speech scroll emerges from the beak. The wing and tail feathers are decoratively stylized, as they are on the other birds, and do not provide any clues to the bird's species. Nevertheless, the crest, hooked beak, and large claws suggest an eagle or hawk.

Character 17

The second frog or toad represented in the frieze occurs here (Fig. 40; Pl. 5). Although it shares some features with character 1, such as webbed feet, this creature lacks the reptilian body markings, teeth, and speech scroll.[46] But the lidded eye and the dotted nose ornament are also present in many examples of the *uinal* glyph. The animal's costume is completed by a knotted, red loincloth, red and white tied pendant, and the usual small, segmented headdress.

Character 18

Breton's color drawings resume with this character (Fig. 42; Pl. 6). This bird differs from the others in having long, sweeping, green tail feathers. Although the upper half of the wing is stylized in the usual manner, the wing terminates in fine, long feathers that move freely in space, unlike the shorter, broader, and stiffer feathers of,

[45] According to Leopold, however, this reputation is largely undeserved, as tales of man-eating jaguars in Mexico are unauthenticated and reports of attacks on humans by either cat are extremely rare (1959: 469, 480).

[46] Von Winning (1985: 27) argues that this figure represents the Jaguar God of the Underworld. He interprets the ornament on the animal's back loincloth as the numeral 7, a number associated with this deity. He also compares the curl at the corner of the mouth to that of the Maya sun god and sees the webbed feet as claws and the pointed ears as jaguar ears. Nevertheless, I feel it more closely resembles Maya images of frogs.

for example, character 16 (Fig. 40). Again, the absence of the head and the ever-present raptorial claws create problems in identifying the bird, but the long, green feathers are attributes of a macaw or quetzal.

Character 19

This animal is of particular interest because it is a full-figure version of the well-known "jog" glyph (T757), now recognized to be a pocket gopher (*ba* in Maya) (Proskouriakoff 1968) (Fig. 42; Pl. 6; Fig. 43).[47] It is also one of the few animals in the frieze for which there is a close hieroglyphic counterpart, although the bat, frog, monkey, jaguar, and birds all take a variety of hieroglyphic forms.

The gopher's salient physical characteristics—stout, corpulent body, yellowish coloring, small eye, round cheek, abbreviated lower jaw, and especially its paired, curved incisors—are all accurately rendered. The gopher's navel is prominently indicated above its blue loincloth, drawing attention to its round belly. Around its neck and just overlapping the rectangular pendant is a woven neckband, while from the back of the blue headdress a cross-hatched red "tail" hangs. The headdress itself, of stucco and limestone flakes, is similar to the puffy turban of the bat. Like several of the other animals, the gopher has a ringed eye, a feature not associated with the hieroglyphic version of the animal. It may allude to the gopher's ability to see in its dark, underground habitat, but it could also impart a sacrificial role to the animal.

The *kan* cross (T281) on the gopher's cheek may refer to the yellow color of the animal's skin (Dutting 1974: 58). It is a consistent feature of the Late Classic variant of the glyph: in the Early Classic, another version of the rodent's head lacking the *kan* cross, T788, is used (Proskouriakoff 1968). The earliest example of T757 with T281 infixed occurs on Piedras Negras Lintel 12, dated 9.4.0.0.0, but almost all others are from Late Classic monuments. The presence of this full-figure variant of T757 adds further support to the stylistic and iconographic evidence that the frieze is Late Classic in date.

[47] Von Winning (1985: 28) sees character 19 as an opossum and, by extension, a *Bacab*.

While the functions of the T757 glyph are disputed, it can be noted that with a T1 (*u*) prefix, it may act as a general verb associated with many different actions, and is often attached to phrases specifying the particular event (Proskouriakoff 1968: 249; Josserand, Schele, and Hopkins 1985: 87, 97). Among these are period-ending celebrations, visions induced by auto-sacrifice, and bloodletting. Fox and Justeson (1984: 28, note 7) in fact argue that in some contexts, T757 may function as a verb specifically meaning "to let blood," since *bah* (pan-Mayan for "to strike, pierce") means exactly that in Tzeltalan.[48] Although this T757 does not form part of an inscription and therefore has no obvious grammatical function, it is nevertheless of interest to note its presence among other figures with more overt connections to sacrifice and blood.

Among the Lacandons today, dreaming about a gopher is a bad omen, foretelling someone's death and burial (Aguilera 1985: 30). This idea may relate to the gopher's habit of burrowing underground.

Character 20

This animal is easily identified as a spider monkey by its spindly arms, slender fingers, small head, and flattened profile (Fig. 42; Pl. 6). No doubt the descending position refers to the spider monkey's ability to move through the trees with agility, suspended from the branches by its long tail. Since both spider and howler monkeys spend much of their lives in the trees, however, it is puzzling that the former should be represented in the upper tier with flying creatures while the latter is consigned to the terrestrial group below. In his analysis of the role of monkeys as Maya scribes, Coe (1977: 346) suggests that while the howler predominates in Maya iconography and myth, it may have been to some extent interchangeable with the spider monkey. At Acanceh, however,

[48] Josserand, Schele, and Hopkins (1979) and Justeson and Norman (n.d.) come to different conclusions regarding the T757 compound's exact grammatical function in Maya texts. The authors agree, however, that it is essentially verbal and occurs in references to bloodletting rites. Victoria Bricker (1986: 135–138) discusses the context and meaning of T757.

Fig. 42 Characters 18–21: bird, gopher, spider monkey, snake. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 10975. 213 × 110 cm.

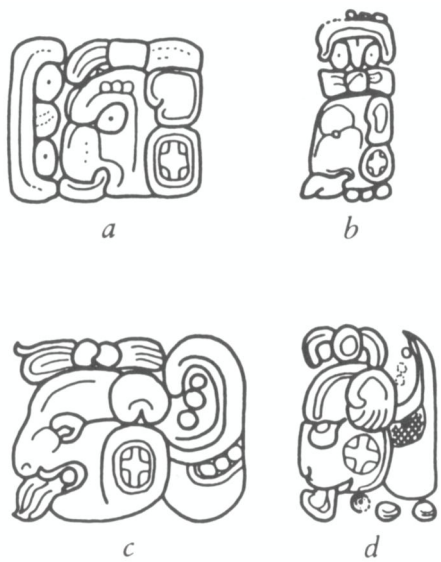


Fig. 43 Examples of the *ba* glyph. After Bricker 1986: fig. 156.

their placement in different realms suggests different functions.

In a variation on the anthropomorphization of the Acanceh fauna, the spider monkey has been given a headdress in the form of a human face, a reversal of the custom of providing Maya rulers with animal or bird face headdresses. While the headdress may be simply a reference to the affinity between humans and monkeys, what may be real shrunken heads, presumably the result of war or sacrifice, ornament the costumes of Maya rulers in monumental art (cf. M. Miller 1986: 161).

However, the presence of both the spider and howler monkey recalls Hun Batz (One Howler Monkey) and Hun Chouen (One Spider Monkey), half-brothers of the Hero Twins of the *Popol Vuh* who were transformed into monkeys and became the patrons of writers, artisans, and musicians (Tedlock 1985: 121–124, 353; M. Coe 1977). A vase from Copan depicts a scribe making a human mask or perhaps a human being (Schele and Miller 1986; 139, pl. 44a). Perhaps this spider monkey wears such a mask to indicate his creator role. The monkeys also have celestial connotations: the *kin* (sun or day) glyph in its full-figure form is represented as a monkey. And while the moon is usually considered female throughout Mesoamerica, among the Lacandon the moon is identified with the nocturnal howler monkey, while the spider monkey, a day animal, symbolizes the sun (Bruce 1976–77: 195) Von Winning (1985: 35) suggests that because this character is in descending position and is placed at the western end of the frieze, it may represent the setting sun.

Character 21

The last of the twenty-one animals is another rattlesnake which appears to twist within its cartouche, revealing the yellow scales on its belly as it turns (Fig. 42; Pl. 6). Its body is blue, without the markings of Character 11, and around its neck is a waterband necklace with small pendants like that of character 10 (Fig. 32). Unfortunately, no trace of the animal's head remains in either old photographs or Breton's watercolor.

CHAPTER 3

Interpretations of the Frieze

Although Seler (1911) provided a detailed description of the frieze, identifying the figures and analyzing the moldings, he did not attempt to interpret its meaning. He hoped that clearing the sides of the building would reveal more stucco reliefs that would allow for an interpretation of the well-preserved facade (Seler 1911: 1024). Unfortunately, when the rest of the building was finally uncovered, it had mostly collapsed, and no decoration remained on the exposed surfaces (Fig. 11). Since its discovery, moreover, no comparable architectural sculpture has appeared in the Maya area. The facade at the Palace of the Stuccoes, then, remains unique in style and theme.

While not usually the subject of monumental sculpture, animals are well represented in other arts and were, of course, significant in many facets of ancient Maya life.[49] The ritual use of fauna is well documented for the Post-Classic (Tozzer 1941: 114–115) and continues to the present. The remains of many different species have been found in caches, burials, caves, and cenotes (Pohl 1983).

Animals and birds are also featured in both ancient and contemporary Maya mythology, including the *Popol Vuh*. Although the Maya epic has been used increasingly to interpret scenes on Maya funerary ceramics (M. Coe 1973), it does not seem to be readily applicable to the characters depicted here: among them, only the monkeys and the bat have prominent roles in the story. There are undoubtedly many other lost tales in which human behavior and the social order are mirrored in the animal world, however.

[49] For a useful illustrated introduction to Pre-Columbian fauna of Mesoamerica, see Aguilera 1985.

Since animal and bird surnames were common among the Maya at the time of the Conquest (Roys 1940) and still function among the Lacandon (Tozzer 1907: 40–42), the figures could conceivably represent patronymics or heraldic crests. No precedents exist in the Classic Period, at least, for representing names by full-size animals, despite the ancient Maya practice of incorporating animals in the hieroglyphs for rulers' personal or family names, both in the inscriptions and in elite costumes. The Mexica did sometimes represent their rulers as hieroglyphic effigies, as exemplified by the eroded stone at Tetzcotzingo depicting King Netzahualcoyotl (Fasting Coyote) of Texcoco (Townsend 1982: 53–59). Although the southern Maya in particular usually combined naturalistic portraiture with hieroglyphic texts, a different tradition may have existed among the northern Maya, where the inscriptions are fewer and briefer.

Similar to the Lacandon animal clan names are the spirit companions of the Tzotzil (Holland 1964: 16–17; Vogt 1969: 371–374). *Nagualism* (the ability to transform oneself into an animal) and *tonalism* (having an animal companion) are widespread concepts throughout Mesoamerica, although they tended to merge together after the Spanish conquest (Foster 1944; Musgrave-Portilla 1982). The Quiche Maya apply the term *naual* more broadly, to refer to the spiritual essence of a person, animal, place, etc. (Tedlock 1985: 337). Some of the animals and birds mentioned in the above sources occur on the frieze, including monkey (both spider and howler), eagle (or any bird of prey), puma or jaguar, and squirrel.

While the presence of naguals and tonals has

not yet been conclusively demonstrated for the Classic Maya, it is possible that some of the animals depicted, especially in vase painting, may represent these creatures. Indeed, a recent hieroglyphic decipherment (Houston and Stuart 1989) suggests that the Classic Maya elite, at least, identified their "companion spirits" or "co-essences" and illustrated them in their art.

One theory regarding the frieze, proposed many years ago, is that the animals and birds represent the signs of a Maya zodiac (Hagar 1914). Hagar's claim is invalidated by the fact that he based his observations on Western rather than on indigenous zodiacs, but the thesis has never been completely abandoned (Aveni 1980: 199–200). There is, in fact, evidence that the Maya represented stars and constellations with animal images, as demonstrated in Room 2 at Bonampak (M. Miller 1986: pls. 16, 19), on a lintel of the Nunnery of Chichen Itza (Maudslay 1889–1902, 3: pl. 13), and in the Paris Codex (1968: 23–24). It is also known that the Pleiades were seen as "the rattlesnake's tail" (*ah tsab kanul*) (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 849; Aveni 1980: 34). The other creatures represented here, however, do not correspond to any of the remaining known animal zodiac figures, which include the turtle and peccaries.

While the relationship between the diverse animals depicted on the frieze may not be obvious to a non-Maya observer, an understanding of Maya zoological taxonomy suggests that they may be more closely related than is at first apparent. Physical similarities, perceived patterns of behavior, and ritual or medicinal functions can all determine animal classification. Indeed, otherwise dissimilar creatures might be brought together visually in any number of ways foreign to Western modes of representation, just as they might also be connected to the human realm. Furthermore, animal imagery and symbols in Mesoamerica can carry metaphorical as well as linguistic values and therefore cannot be read as simply a faithful record of the natural world (cf. Brown n.d.: 84–85).

The fairly obvious celestial-terrestrial division between the characters in the upper and lower registers of the frieze has already been noted. With the exception of the single human (who may in fact be winged) and the spider monkey, all of the characters in the upper tier can fly. Nevertheless, since the monkey spends most of its time in treetops (Leopold 1959: 334), the Maya may have linked it to the celestial sphere. Its connection with the sky is reinforced by the existence of the monkey substitution for the *kin* hieroglyph. The bat, of course, shares the bird's ability to fly, and the Tzeltal Maya in fact recognize an affinity between them (Hunn 1977: 201). In Yucatec, one of the species of bat is known as *ikim soots'*, derived from *ikim,* a word for nocturnal bird or owl (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 26).

The remaining birds in the upper register are quite stylized, but at the same time are depicted as belonging to different species. Nevertheless, all have been transformed into raptorial birds by their large claws. The dripping blood motif that appears in the claws of several of the birds reinforces the image of predatory beasts and also recalls the name of one of the lords of Xibalba, "Bloody Claws" (Tedlock 1985: 328).

The recognizable animals of the lower sphere are terrestrial or amphibian, although one might dispute the presence of two decidedly arboreal mammals, the squirrel and the howler monkey. In Tzeltal, however, both animals are part of a monkey complex that also includes rabbits and gophers (Hunn 1977: 203–207).

A number of the animals and birds represented, such as the feline, bat, and frog, have nocturnal habits. The ability to see well, either in the dark or at a great distance, may be indicated by the goggles worn by some of the creatures. Even creatures as dissimilar as snakes and felines might have been related taxonomically by the Maya because of their hypnotic gaze and pupils that contract to vertical slits in strong light (Brown n.d.: 141). Snakes, bats, frogs, and some birds live in and around caves, while gophers and squirrels burrow underground.

Several of the animals are also amphibious. Reference has already been made to the role of waterbirds and anurans for the Maya. Although rarely represented on a monumental scale, aquatic animals such as waterbirds, turtles, and toads were modeled in stucco on the rims of *chultunes,*

used for the storage of rainwater in the dry Puuc area of Yucatan (Barrera Rubio 1985).

It has already been suggested that the stepped niche surrounding each character is a stylized cave opening. Relevant to the Acanceh frieze, perhaps, is the fact that the Maya words *k'u* (temple) and *aktun* (cave) both have secondary meanings of animal burrow or nest (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 7, 416).[50] At one and the same time, then, the figures may be understood as inhabiting their burrow, a cave, and a temple. And although there is no evidence that the Palace of the Stuccoes itself was built over a cave, this practice is well documented in Mesoamerica (Heyden 1981). Maya pyramids built over caves include the so-called High Priest's Grave at Chichen Itza, for example.

Caves and cenotes may have been linked conceptually by the Maya, not only as water sources but as entrances to the underworld. The relationship between them is reinforced by the similarity of offerings, including animal remains, that were deposited in both (Pohl 1983: 98). The Cenote Chun Kapoc, located a few blocks north of Acanceh's main plaza, has not been explored archaeologically but undoubtedly served the Pre-Columbian community. It contains a long (30 m by 7 m), flooded cave inhabited by a large bat population (Reddell 1977: 256). As a place of transition to the underworld, it would be surprising if Acanceh's cenote, like those of Dzibilchaltun and other northern sites, was not the focus of ritual activity and offerings.

A continuing thread throughout the frieze is the water imagery represented by the accoutrements of the fauna, the vessels below the superior molding, and the waterband that forms the upper frame for the niches below. The presence of drops and the position of the band at the top of the frieze imply that rainfall, rather than a standing body of water like a cenote or the mythical watery underworld, is represented. Among the Maya and indeed throughout Mesoamerica, caves were seen as the abodes of rain deities and sources of rainclouds, wind, and lightning (MacLeod and Puleston 1978: 72–73). Chalcatzingo Monument 1, with rainclouds and raindrops depicted above a misty cave, is an early manifestation of this concept. While the Acanceh waterband is unlike Classic Maya waterbands (cf. Coggins 1983: 44–52), it may well be a local Teotihuacan-inspired version.

Closely associated with the water iconography of the frieze is that of blood. It is represented not only by such obvious motifs as a severed head and dripping blood, but also by the complex of Teotihuacan motifs, including ringed eyes, speech scrolls, stylized hearts, and central Mexican costume elements that were adopted by the Late Classic Maya as insignia of bloodletting. Tedlock (1985: 337) notes that in the *Popol Vuh* the word *naual* is sometimes paired with *puz,* a term referring both to cutting the flesh with a knife and to heart sacrifice. If the Acanceh animals are "companion spirits," the accoutrements of bloodletting that accompany them underline their sacrificial role.

The combination of sacrificial and water motifs suggests that the entire relief might be viewed as an unusual version of the underworld, or perhaps more correctly as the place of transition between the world of the living and that of the underworld gods. In the *Popol Vuh,* for example, the lords of the underworld used birds and animals as messengers (Tedlock 1985: 109, 128 ff). The fauna represented here may have been understood as inhabitants of the earth, guardians to its openings, and mediators between the realm of man and that of the underworld.

The skyband below might at first seem out of place in a relief apparently dedicated to the watery underworld. As noted above, however, skybands in basal positions occur elsewhere in Maya art. Furthermore, the remaining head of the serpent is upside down, suggesting that at the eastern end, at least, it is dead (Seler 1911: 1015–1016). Schele and Miller (1986: 45) compare the double-headed skyband to the westerly journey of Venus pulling the sun out of the underworld in the morning and following it back in at night. Generally speaking, when the celestial monster is used in architecture, the "front" or living head is

[50] I am indebted to Andrea Stone (n.d.) for this observation. Her book on Maya cave painting will provide a much-needed source on this important aspect of Maya art. See also the useful catalogue of Maya caves compiled by Juan Luis Bonor Villarejo (1989).

placed at the western side of the structure, representing Venus, while the inverted and sometimes partially skeletal head, symbolizing the sun in the underworld, appears in the east, following Venus out of the underworld at dawn. With the western head of the Acanceh celestial serpent missing, it can no longer be determined if the same pattern holds, but it would be logical within its context. Robertson (n.d.) has shown that the various bicephalic monsters of the Palace at Palenque—most marked with sky signs—are related to death and sacrifice, frame entrances to the underworld, and decorate stone benches on which rulers' corpses may have been placed.

The missing heads of the large birds at the east and west ends of the frieze preclude the identification of species. Nevertheless, since they substitute for the more common Chac mask motif, it is tempting to see them as examples of the *muan* bird associated with the topmost layer of the Maya universe, with clouds and rain, but also with night and the underworld (Thompson 1960: 114–115; 1972: 55). Since they frame the entire frieze, they may have served to unite the sky, earth, and underworld.

Exterior architectural decoration in the Late Classic rarely encompasses overt underworld themes, emphasizing instead aspects of rulership such as royal portraiture and insignia, dynastic narrative, and the relationship between the ruler and deities. Purely mythical imagery, including anthropomorphized animals, is usually relegated to the private sphere and the world of the dead, as examplified by funerary ceramics. Nevertheless, there is at least one precedent for underworld imagery in the northern lowlands, in the frieze of the contemporaneous Str. 1-sub at Dzibilchaltun (Fig. 15). Although its iconography is distinct from that of Acanceh, which emphasizes the terrestrial and sacrificial aspects of the underworld, it may refer to the waters of the underworld, and specifically to the Cenote Xlacah at the site's center (Coggins 1983: 36). Waterlilies, shells, trilobal water motifs, and other symbols of water, as well as long-nosed skeletal heads, ornament the streams of the underworld that cover the upper facade of the building.

Str. 1-sub must also be seen in context, as one part of the large ritual architectural complex of Dzibilchaltun. While the growth of the modern town over the ancient ruins obscures the plan of Pre-Conquest Acanceh, it is clear that the Acropolis was built south and slightly east of the earlier pyramid and the other mounds near it, as if to form the southern end of a north-south axis or plaza. When constructed, the Palace of the Stuccoes would have faced the great pyramid and probably would have been the highest structure at the site. How long the Palace enjoyed this prominent position cannot be determined, but when a second structure was built very close to and opposite the Palace, it would have visually sealed it off from the older pyramid, perhaps changing its function and reducing its importance. Eventually, both structures were filled in and used as the foundation for another building in the new Florescent style of architecture, obliterated and preserved at the same time, as were so many Maya buildings.

While a definitive interpretation of this unique facade remains elusive, this analysis makes possible a clearer view of its significance in Late Classic Maya history. If the Palace of the Stuccoes was built at the close of the seventh century, as has been proposed, its construction would have fallen at the beginning of the Epiclassic Period, an era characterized by the exchange of goods, people, and ideas throughout Mesoamerica. Although the direct influence of Teotihuacan had waned considerably after about A.D. 550, revivals of Teotihuacan imagery occur in the Maya area toward the end of the seventh century, predating the more pronounced cultural changes of the Post-Classic, beginning with the Itza or Putun and culminating with the great cosmopolitan center of Chichen Itza, inextricably (but still inexplicably) linked with Tula.

The presence of at least two Teotihuacan-influenced buildings (the Palace of the Stuccoes and Dzibilchaltun Structure 612) in the north during Early Period II raises questions regarding the nature of contact with the highlands at this time. In the first place, the structures were built close to or even after the demise of Teotihuacan as a major power in Mesoamerica. Second, unlike the Guatemalan highlands and the Peten, their construction

is preceded in Early Period I by only a handful of artifacts displaying non-Maya features (Andrews V 1979: 245). While shifting trade relationships between Maya and non-Maya are probably significant, they can only partially explain the new preoccupation with foreign architectural forms.

The Acanceh frieze should be seen not as an example of Teotihuacan influence in the northern lowlands, but as a deliberate adaptation of central Mexican forms to Maya ends. A similar borrowing and redefining of Teotihuacan elements can be seen on monuments contemporary with Acanceh in the southern Maya lowlands that depict or commemorate battles, sacrifice, and self-mutilation. Although the protagonists of the Acanceh relief are animals rather than humans, they, too, wear insignia of Teotihuacan. I have proposed that the entire facade refers to sacrifice, death, and the Maya underworld, themes that are reiterated in many different forms in all media of Classic Maya art. While the emphasis on Teotihuacan-derived composition and motifs is striking, it does not necessarily signify direct central Mexican influence. At Teotihuacan itself nothing exists that even distantly resembles the frieze.

The eclectic nature of the facade can be compared to the architectural reliefs of Xochicalco and the murals of Cacaxtla, works dating from approximately the same time as Acanceh, or slightly later. Different as the media and themes are at the three sites, the artists working there were able to recombine stylistic and iconographic elements from various sources in new and unfamiliar ways. While Cacaxtla for the most part adopted the Maya style, Xochicalco's sources may have included not only the Maya region, but also Oaxaca, Teotihuacan, Veracruz, and the Pacific coast (Nagao 1989: 98; V. Smith n.d.: 406–407). The political interactions that led to these new artistic expressions are still not well understood, but the idea that eclectic monuments literally reflect invasion or migration must be abandoned and replaced by fresh and more complex models (cf. Nagao 1989: 83). In any case, excessively militaristic or sacrifical imagery may represent politically manipulative, self-aggrandizing statements rather than historical reality (cf. Nagao 1989; Stone 1989).

In the case of Acanceh, its setting within a modern town and the lack of excavation at the site have made it particularly difficult to understand its cultural connections, both within and outside the Maya area. Despite its modest size, Acanceh, like Xochicalco and Cacaxtla, was able to create a work whose sources come from far outside its presumably small sphere of influence. But because the stucco frieze excludes for the most part the human protagonists who might be seen as real or at least symbolic participants in human events, its message remains esoteric.

In a recent analysis of the Cacaxtla murals, George Kubler (1980) pointed out the necessity of defining more clearly terms like "eclecticism" and "syncretism" which are frequently used to describe artistic phenomena that defy neat cultural classification. Kubler bases his definitions on Enrico Crispolti's analysis of eclecticism in art (1961). While Crispolti is concerned mostly with the Near East and Europe, much of his discussion can be applied to Pre-Columbian art. For example, he addresses commercial, political, and ideological explanations for the development of eclectic styles, all of which have been proposed as reasons for changes in Mesoamerican art styles. A distinction is made between diachronic eclecticism, in which artists or patrons make aesthetic choices from the distant past, including those from the same civilization's past, in order to create a new style, and synchronic eclecticism, in which the borrowing is from the recent past and is dictated by political and economic considerations (Crispolti 1961: col. 546; Kubler 1980: 172).

Kubler suggests that the patrons and artists of Cacaxtla, and by implication those responsible for other eclectic Mesoamerican art styles, were more concerned with synchronic than diachronic choices. While in Pre-Columbian art is is probably impossible to isolate aesthetic, political, or ideological reasons for the development of any eclectic style, a distinction can obviously be made between styles that seem to be inextricably linked with military conquest, such as that of Chichen Itza, those that may represent dynastic links with foreigners, as proposed for Early Classic Tikal, and those that are removed in time and/or space

from the contributing culture. This last form of eclecticism, which seems to fit comfortably in neither of Kubler's two categories of eclecticism, is best represented by the widespread Mexicanizing cultural renascence of 9.13.0.0.0 in the Maya area. By this time, central Mexican elements are often so transformed or assimilated that it is impossible to determine their original source or means of transmission, although they must have passed through cultural filters like the Gulf Coat area to reach their final destination. Unlike both earlier and later manifestations of central highland influence in the Maya area, the northern Mexicanizing phenomenon of Early Period II appears to have been a local and presumably voluntary reinterpretation of Teotihuacan forms rather than one directly transplanted from outside or imposed by foreigners. Just as the occupants of Xochicalco and Cacaxtla may have turned to contemporary Maya models when they wished to enhance their prestige, the Maya themselves continued to look to the central highlands for images of power. We might well ask if the elites, at least, of each region were able to read and interpret the art of other cultures at this time.

At the same time, the Acanceh facade is unlike other contemporary examples of eclecticism in which minor central Mexican motifs are grafted onto essentially Maya forms, as in the Teotihuacan costume elements occurring on many Late Classic stelae. The example of Acanceh represents a special kind of syncretism in which Maya and central Mexican sculptural techniques, style, and iconography are smoothly woven together to create a new form that is neither entirely revivalistic nor entirely synchronic, since no similar expression exists in extant Teotihuacan or Maya art. Future archaeological discoveries in the northern lowlands, the adjacent Gulf Coast region, and the central highlands will, it is hoped, expand the corpus of cosmopolitan monuments and clarify the nature of cultural contacts within Mesoamerica during the Epiclassic. In the meantime, the frieze of the Palace of the Stuccoes at Acanceh remains a unique example of Epiclassic eclecticism in the northern Maya lowlands.

Appendix

The Murals

The reprinted version of Seler's paper on Acanceh includes an appendix on some hieroglyphs painted on the walls of "tomb chambers" (1902–23: 403–404). The exact location of these chambers is not clear from Seler's description, although they would appear to have been in the structure to the north of the Palace.[51] Since Seler describes them as rooms "closed from all sides and accessible only from above," it is probable that he saw the vaulted rooms of one of the buildings, which at the time would have had no direct access but could only have been entered by breaking through the roof or upper facade. The Palace of the Stuccoes, originally cleared only as far as the medial molding, was for a time believed to have been the terrace of a pyramid (Breton 1908: 37; Seler 1911: 1015). Although Breton states, and Seler suggests, that "tomb chambers" also lay behind the stucco facade, neither offers evidence, such as skeletal remains or offerings, for designating these rooms as tombs.[52]

Although Structure 2's interior was coated with a thick layer of stucco (Andrews IV 1965: fig. 8), no investigator mentions any murals at Acanceh. It is therefore surprising to find among the Breton material in Bristol three watercolors labeled only "copy of wall painting, small chamber, Acanceh" (Figs. 44–46; Pls. 7–9). These paintings depict standing figures and fragmentary texts, one of which is illustrated in Seler's appendix. With the possible exception of one other passage, the rest of the hieroglyphs copied by Seler, however, do not correspond to the remaining ones in Breton's paintings. Furthermore, Seler makes no reference to figures, but only to walls "decorated with a smooth stucco layer" and the "remains of hieroglyphs executed in red color" (1902–23: 403, my translation). Seler's drawings, with readings by Thompson (1962) and the author, are reproduced in Fig. 47.[53] No other information regard-

[51] Seler describes the location of these chambers as follows:

> Here in levelling an artificial mound, burial chambers faced with stucco were encountered, and opposite these a wall facing N., about 12 m. long and 2 m. high, behind which burial chambers were also probably hidden, but the wall lies somewhat higher and is divided by a narrow passage from the S. front of the burial chambers mentioned first (Seler 1911: 1014; Eng. trans. 1939: 2).

In the appendix published with the reprinted version of the article, Seler (1902–23: 403; my translation) writes:

> The tombs that have been discovered in front of the stucco facade described above form rooms that are closed from all sides and seem to have been accessbile only from above.
>
> Note that the "burial chambers" are also described as faced with stucco. If this facade is the south exterior wall of the structure to the north of the palace, nothing remains today of any stucco coating: the remaining wall, destroyed above the level of the medial molding, is of roughly cut stone like the Palace.

[52] In a footnote, Breton (1908: 37) refers to a mass of breccia, which apparently contained human dust, in front of the eastern corner of the stucco relief of the Palace. She does not explain what she means by "human dust," but does indicate that she found "no trace of burial or cremation." The material she was sifting must have been the fill used to cover the passage between the two buildings when they were leveled in ancient times.

[53] Seler's reading of the hieroglyphs he copied follows (numbers in parentheses refer to my plate numbers):

> They are in part well-known signs. Thus we have in pl. 7 [Fig. 47c] and in pl. 8A, 2 [Fig. 47d], as also possibly in pl. 8B, 1 [Fig. 47d], the animal with the sharp nose and the flaming tongue which probably represents the hound thrown from the sky, the lightning animal. In pl. 8A, 3 [Fig. 47d] the *been-kak* group, which in all likelihood is to be read either "conqueror" or "lord" (Mexican: *tepeuh* or *tepeuani*), is recognized. In pl. 8B, 2 [Fig. 47d], we have the day sign *imix*, attached to the stone knife element, in pl. 9, 3 [Fig. 47e], the day sign *akbal;* in pl. 5 [Fig. 47a], the day sign *ahau,* in pl. 6 [Fig. 47b], the *uinal mol* (Seler 1902–23: 403–404; my translation).

John Justeson (personal communication, 1981) points out that Seler anticipated Lounsbury (1973) in reading the *ben-ich* (Seler's *been-kak*) compound as "lord," although without the necessary supporting linguistic and epigraphic evidence.

Fig. 44 Mural 1. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 209 × 95 cm.

Fig. 45 Mural 2. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 200 × 94.5 cm.

Fig. 46 Mural 3. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 200 × 96 cm.

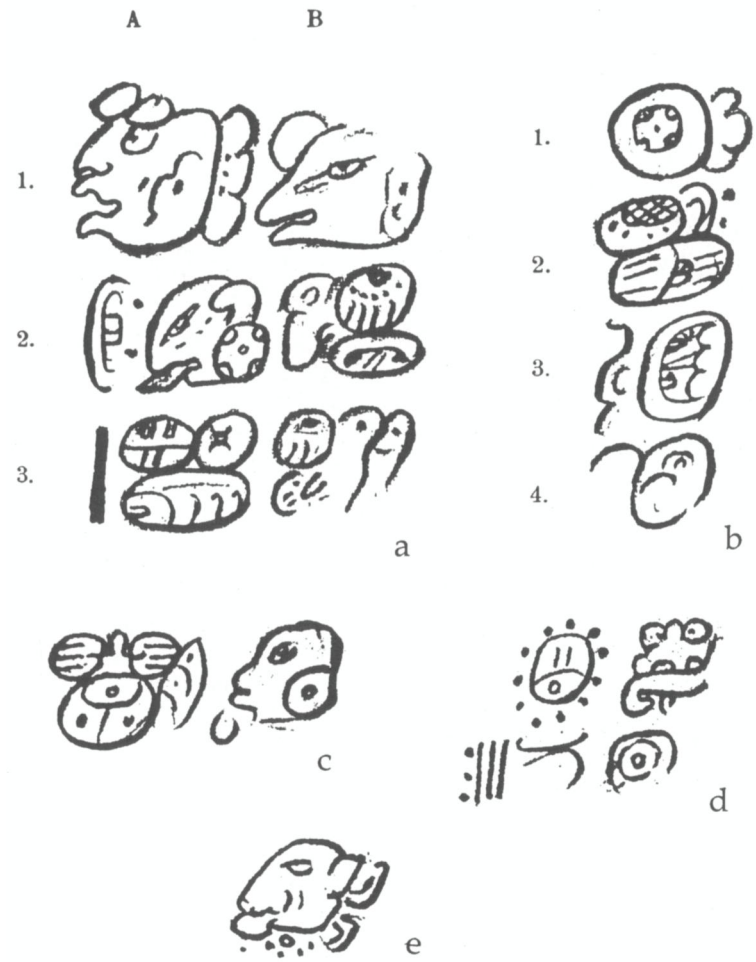


Fig. 47 Hieroglyphs from murals at Acanceh: (a) original location unknown; (b) from Mural 1, I? (Fig. 44); (c) original location unknown; (d) from Mural 1, D1–E2 (Fig. 44); (e) original location unknown. After Seler 1902–23: pls. 5–9.

ing the original location of the painted hieroglyphs is provided by Seler.

Since one of the texts reproduced by Seler (Fig. 47d) also appears near the top of Breton's copy of the mural (Fig. 44, D–E), it is just possible that the entire wall was not yet uncovered at the time of Seler's first visit to Acanceh, and that he viewed only the upper portion of the mural. Although Breton's account of the frieze's discovery was the first to be published, in 1908, both Breton and Seler were at the site the year before. If Breton's prolonged stay at Acanceh followed Seler's first visit in 1907, she (or others) may have cleared the chamber. But two of Seler's drawings of the hieroglyphs (Fig. 47a, b) were done in 1911, presumably after Breton copied the figures, suggesting that not all of the texts were associated with the murals. Writing in 1911 (p. 1024), Seler mentions continuing destruction of the Palace the previous year, so perhaps the painted walls seen by Breton were gone by then. Nevertheless, if the figures were visible at all between 1907 and 1911, their absence from any published accounts remains puzzling.

The structure in which the murals were painted almost certainly predates the Pure Florescent building which was in ruins when the Acropolis was first explored. If, as has been suggested, the murals were located in Structure 2, they were proba-

bly painted shortly after the construction of the Palace of the Stuccoes. Structure 2 has been dated slightly later than the Palace of the Stuccoes, on the basis of architectural comparisons with Structure 57 at Dzibilchaltun (Andrews and Andrews 1980: 146). Structure 57's suggested date is toward the end of Early Period II, around 10.0.0.0.0 (ca. A.D. 830). Structure 2 at Acanceh, then, could be as early as the seventh century A.D., if an Early Period II date is accepted for the Palace of the Stuccoes, or as late as the ninth century. Although it is unfortunate that the exact location and context of the murals can no longer be determined, their significance as one of the few examples of northern Maya wall painting should not be overlooked.

The original disposition of the figures represented in the three Breton watercolor copies is not known, although the accompanying annotation indicates they are from a single room. While all three are framed at the top with one or more bands of reddish-brown hue, only one scene also has a vertical margin of color (Fig. 44). This may mark the beginning or ending of a scene, or the corner of a room. Also present in the three scenes is a ground line, which, in the case of Figs. 45 and 46, has vertical lines below it suggesting the legs of a bench or platform.

Figure 44 represents two standing figures, one facing and gesturing to his left, the other, at a slightly higher level, bending away from his companion in a frontal or three-quarter view. Both are painted chocolate brown with touches of gray, red, and blue remaining in their costumes and headdresses. The feathers of the right-hand figure's headdress appear to sweep down over the shoulder of the left-hand figure, just touching a bulbous white and yellow object which may represent the top of a staff or part of a necklace.[54] The position of the left-hand figure's head is unclear: where the viewer might expect to find it, in profile facing left, there is instead a T-shaped element that continues up from the figure's bent right arm and does not conform to the outlines of the head. Lower down, between the figure's leg and two hieroglyphs, is an intriguing flesh-colored shape hinting at the presence of another figure at his feet.

The text above the two figures is the best preserved and clearest of those copied by Breton; glyphs D1–E2 were also copied, although less accurately, by Seler (Fig. 47d). According to John Justeson (personal communication, 1984), they are the remains of a Long Count date of three rows and six columns (A1–F2), followed by additional material at E3–F3 and by at least two (and perhaps four) additional columns of indeterminate length. The preserved glyphs would have formed part of the fourth and fifth columns (D–E). The third Lord of the Night, G3, occurs at D1, followed by a record of 18D (the 18th day of the lunar month) in D2(–C3?). A form of Glyph X seems to occur at E1, followed by the remains of Glyph B (in barest outline) at F1. At E2, either glyph A9 or A10 (indicating that the lunar month had 29 or 20 days respectively) appears, and would have been followed by the month position at F2. The non-calendrical portion of the text probably began at E3. This part of the text is unfortunately the least informative for anchoring the date chronologically. However, the occurrence at G3 of the Lords of the Night shows at least that the date is historical, referring to an event; had it been a period ending date, the Lord of the Night would have been G9.

Only one sign in the non-calendrical portion of the text remains, a variant of T747b, at G1. Mathews and Justeson (1984) indicate that this sign functions exclusively as the preposition *ti* (or cognate), most frequently in chronological statements and statements of accession.

At the lower left of the scene there is a column of at least two glyphs: the upper one (I1) appears to be 505 (*akbal*) with a prefix of 747, T125, T126, or T128, but may also be the same hieroglyph copied by Seler (Fig. 47b, 3) and identified by Thompson as 172?.505. Otherwise, Seler's column of four glyphs cannot be matched by any of the hieroglyphs in the Breton drawings.

The second watercolor (Fig. 45) represents another standing figure, of whom the upper torso and part of the right leg remain. In contrast to the dark color of the figures in Figure 44, he is painted a lighter flesh tone. He appears to stand in

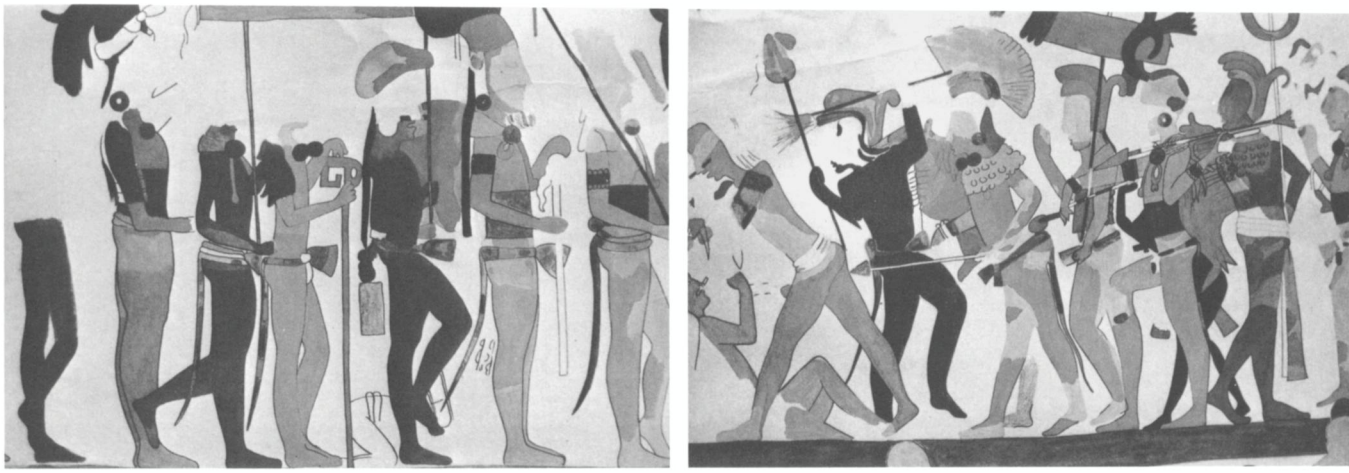
[54] Cf. the *Spondylus* shells worn by the lords of Bonampak in Room 1, discussed in M. Miller (1986: 62–63).

Fig. 48 Bonampak, west wall, Room 1. After M. Miller 1986: pl. 6.

a frontal position, head in profile to his right, although some torsion is suggested by the curving outline of the body, the hint of the left arm's outline across the chest, and the position of the beaded jade collar, as if the shoulders are turned. The figure's headdress of carefully delineated feathers sweeps forward to frame an unusual headpiece. Instead of the more common deity mask motif, there is a grotesque blue human head, possibly enclosed within the open jaws of a monster or animal. Either forming part of the enclosing helmet or protruding from the human's mouth are short green feathers. The features of the human head are distinctly non-Maya. The head, in fact, bears some resemblance to the small human heads, possibly shrunken, worn by two of the parasol bearers in Room 1 at Bonampak (Fig. 48, right). Whether this is a trophy head cannot be proven, but it does not resemble any known Maya deity. Nor can its vivid blue hue be easily explained. Patches of blue and red, perhaps parts of the figure's costume, can be seen near his remaining foot and leg. Opposite his shoulders are flesh-colored areas, the largest including a yellowish oval, that again hint at the presence of a second participant.

Only a few scattered hieroglyphs remain in this scene; it is not clear whether they formed part of larger texts or merely served as brief captions for the figures represented. At the upper left there is a hieroglyph marked with a *caban* sign (A2); it may have been a profile head, such as the T1004 female head variant. The affixes are not very clear, although the postfix may be T129.

The two hieroglyphs painted on the gray patch in the center of the scene are much clearer. The first (E1) is T669, read *cha/ka,* with affixes of T130 and T126. Although there are numerous examples of the combination T126.669:130.126, a verbal expression (Schele 1982: 206), this particular verbal pattern (T669:130.126) has not been identified. Since *chah* means mutilated or crippled



a b

Fig. 49 Chacmultun mural, Room 1, Building 3: (a) upper register, left side, detail; (b) upper register, middle, detail. Copy by Martine Fettweis, after Mayer 1990: pls. 22, 24.

in Yucatec (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 75), this may well be a bloodletting expression whose protagonist is named in the next glyph (E2) (John Justeson, personal communication, 1984). It appears to be T561b:23, read *caan,* sky, with T23, *na,* acting as a phonetic complement. Sky names and titles figure prominently at a number of Maya sites; in this case, this phrase could refer to auto-sacrifice by one of the participants in the scene.

Finally, C1, just behind the feather headdress, looks somewhat like T764, the *Chicchan* head that is not only a day sign but also the main sign for both the so-called "captor" glyph and the Emblem Glyph of El Peru. Unfortunately, the condition of the text makes it impossible to determine the meaning and context of this particular example of the hieroglyph.

In the last watercolor (Fig. 46), there is a figure standing in profile to the viewer's left, with one arm (represented by two brown patches) held out behind him. Despite the fragmentary condition of the image and the static position of the figure's legs, the scene is full of movement. The sweeping backward gesture is balanced by the swath of blue across the torso and the forward movement of the large feather headdress. Between the two large areas of blue appears a serpentine element in red, whose design recalls some of the painted, dyed, or woven textiles in the Bonampak murals. Its relationship to the figure, however, is unclear.

There were some hieroglyphs associated with this scene, notably to the left and right of the figure's legs, but they are not legible as copied, nor can they be matched with Seler's remaining drawings (Fig. 47a, c, and e).

Stylistic Comparisons and Dating of the Murals

Only a handful of murals survive in the northern Maya area, and most of these are of Post-Classic date.[55] The extant mural that most resembles the Acanceh paintings may be that of Chacmultun, a Puuc site not far from Tekax (Fig. 49). The mural, described by Kubler (1984: 279) as the work of a "provincial and retardaire school of Late Classic date," has a military theme: armed warriors, captives, and possibly even a skirmish are represented.[56] The varied skin tones and relatively simple clothing of the participants, as well as their proportions and twisting body positions, are not unlike the Acanceh figures. The structure in which the Chacmultun mural is housed, however, although greatly destroyed even at the turn of the century, appears to be a Puuc style building and should therefore be later than either of the structures which may have contained the Acanceh

[55] For a useful survey of paintings in the northern Maya area, see Paxton (1986: app. 1.1 and pls.).

[56] Although E. H. Thompson's color reproduction, done around 1899, is more complete, M. Fettweis' is more accurate.

murals (E. H. Thompson 1904: pl. v; Pollock 1980: 366).

A more complete Late Classic mural is found at another Puuc site, Mulchic. Unlike Chacmultun, which appears to lack inscriptions, this mural has hieroglyphic texts painted both above the upper border of the scenes and next to some of the participants (Piña Chan 1962, 1964: figs. 1–3). Short hieroglyphic texts placed near and perhaps identifying the figures are more typical of polychrome ceramics and Bonampak than of northern Maya wall paintings.[57] The texts at both Mulchic and Acanceh were painted with a dark red-brown pigment on a white or cream background. As at Chacmultun, a battle and its aftermath are represented, but the scenes are both more complex and more skillfully rendered. Some of the participants wear grotesque masks and headdresses, although none resemble the headdress worn by the figure represented in Figure 45. The Mulchic headdresses, while elaborate, generally lack the broad panaches of long sweeping feathers worn by the Acanceh figures.

Not far from Chacmultun, the murals of Dzula also include processional figures standing on different kinds of ground lines (E. H. Thompson 1904: pl. II). The Dzula scenes, however, are divided into registers and include simply dressed seated and kneeling figures, others holding baskets, and architecture. They are more reminiscent of the paintings at Chichen Itza, however, than of the Acanceh images.

There is one last mural in the northern lowlands that if in better condition might have provided a closer analogy to Acanceh. Five profile figures in procession and the remains of hieroglyphs are found at Coba in the El Cuartel structure (Fig. 50). From the little that can be seen of the remains, the figures have the same proportions, brown flesh, relatively simple costumes, and elaborate headdresses as the Acanceh figures.

Comparisons with the better-known mural cycle of Bonampak are inevitable. The admittedly broad period of time during which the Acanceh structures could have been built could coincide

Fig. 50 Coba, mural on north wall in north room, El Cuartel Structure. Processional figure 1. After Lombardo de Ruiz 1987: fig. 72.

with the Bonampak murals, painted in a conservative style toward the end of the eighth century. In any case, the Acanceh murals share certain conventions with those of the Usumacinta site. The bands of red above the figures recall those that divide the Bonampak walls into registers. The large, sweeping feathered headdresses seem more like those worn by some of the Bonampak figures than by the warriors at Chacmultun, for example. These figures are taller and slimmer than their more heavy-set counterparts at Bonampak, how-

[57] This may be due to problems in preservation, although the northern area in general lacks a large corpus of hieroglyphic writing.

ever. Finally, if the Acanceh paintings formed part of a continuous frieze, it may have represented a processional scene comparable to that represented in Room 1 at Bonampak (Fig. 48).

With so little remaining of the images, and with their archaeological context uncertain, the dating of the Acanceh murals is as problematic as that of the stucco facade. Nevertheless, on stylistic grounds, they are almost certainly Late rather than Early Classic: the figures' poses and costumes conform much more closely to Bonampak conventions than to those of, for example, the Early Classic mural discovered in Uaxactun B-XIII (Smith 1950: fig. 46). The style of the hieroglyphs, too, appears to be of the latter part of the Late Classic (John Justeson, personal communication, 1984).

The murals leave us with an intriguing glimpse of ritual life at Acanceh. With the inventory of Maya murals in the Yucatan peninsula currently being undertaken (Fettweis 1983: 53–54; Paxton 1986: app. 1.1; Lombardo de Ruiz 1987), the documentation of existing wall paintings and the discovery of new ones may shed light on the context and meaning of the rediscovered wall paintings of Acanceh.

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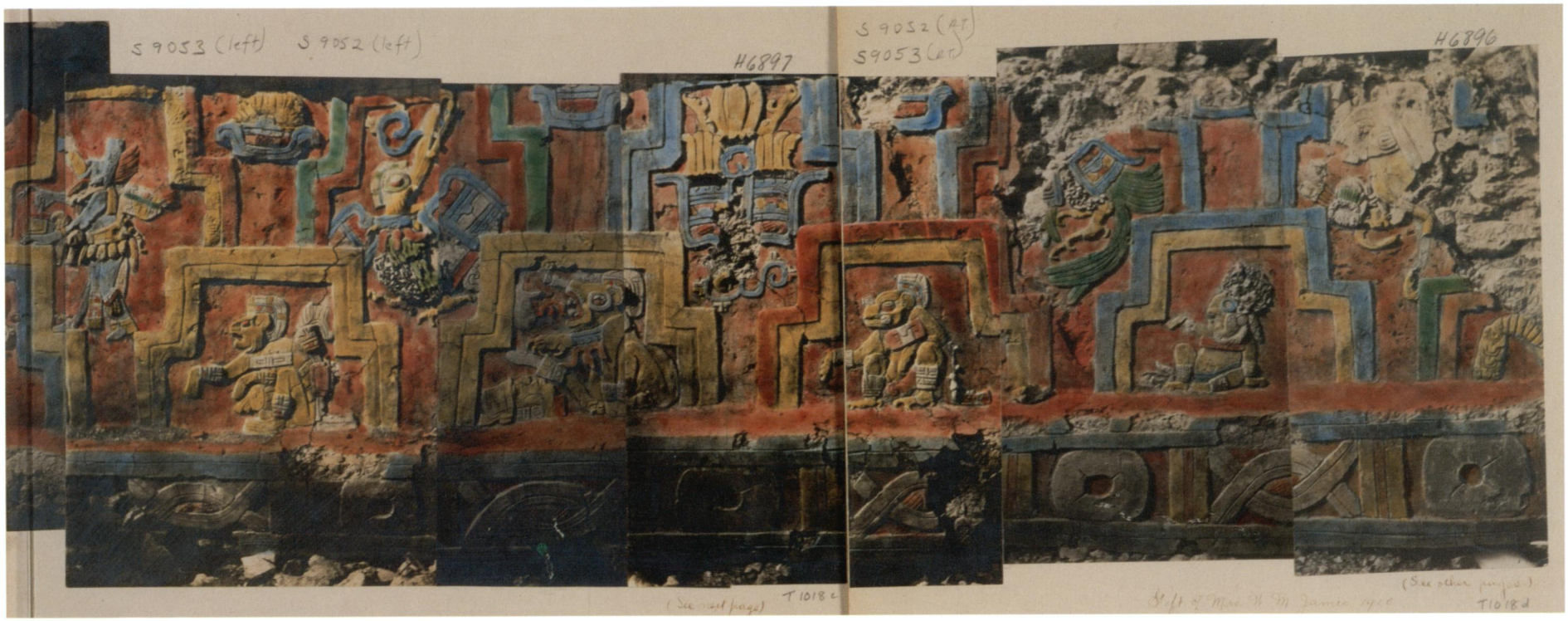
Pl. 1 Superior molding, detail. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186c. Length 41.5 cm.

Pl. 2 Bird, eastern end of frieze. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8220a. 120 × 61 cm.

Pl. 3 Characters 1–5: frog or toad, bird, squirrel, bird, unidentified animal. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186b. 280 × 150 cm.

Pl. 4 Characters 6–11: bird, unidentified animal, bat, howler monkey, bird, snake. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8186a. 276 × 119 cm.



Pl. 5 Characters 12–21: human, rodent, bird, feline, bird, and others. Hand-colored photograph, courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

Pl. 6 Characters 18–21: bird, gopher, spider monkey, snake. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 10975. 213 × 110 cm.

Pl. 7 Mural 1. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 209 × 95 cm.

Pl. 8 Mural 2. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the City of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 200 × 94.5 cm.

Pl. 9 Mural 3. Watercolor by Adela Breton, courtesy of the city of Bristol Museum, BRSMG 8184. 200 × 96 cm.